


The Liar

By Goldoni

Decorated by
C. Lovat Fraser



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THE LIAR

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CLAVAT FRASER, 1920.

THE LIAR.

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A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY
CARLO GOLDONI

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN BY
GRACE LOVAT FRASER

WITH DECORATIONS BY
G. LOVAT FRASER

AND AN INTRODUCTION BY
E. GORDON CRAIG

LONDON
SELWYN AND BLOUNT, LTD.
21 YORK BUILDINGS, ADELPHI, W.C.2

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First published 1922

PQ
4695
E5 B84
1922a
709419

*Printed in Great Britain by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd.,
London and Aylesbury*

INTRODUCTION

BY E. GORDON CRAIG

CARLO GOLDONI was born in Venice on the 25th of February, 1707, in a house at the corner of the Ca' Cent'Anni.

For forty years he was doing everything, going everywhere. He was Advocate, Candidate for Holy Orders, Coadjutor of the Criminal Chancellor, Clerk of the Procurator, Consul of the Republic of Genoa at Venice, writer, compiler of almanacks, once nearly a monk—no kind of “adventurer,” and always having adventures; and for forty years meeting every kind of person from diplomats and ladies of pleasure to swindlers and poets: utterly young in a quiet old way—old in that he seldom gave way to despair. Not sentimental, not tragic, smiling always—a good little disposition; absent-minded, yet living entirely in the present; frank, but neither vain nor proud; full of good qualities,—what we should call a dear little man. No more like the other Venetians of those sceptical times than Voltaire was like the disbelievers of his land—a child like Voltaire, but less roguish; and very fond of the theatre.

The reason I do not say he was passionately fond of it is that this is just what he was *not*.

In those days every Italian went to the theatre and went into raptures or furies with what he saw. But every Italian was not passionately fond of the theatre. *Only the actors were that*, and the theatre of Italy in the eighteenth century was still the theatre of the actors.

Unless you know something about the European theatre of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries you will not know that the Italian actors practically made it. Some poets and architects lent it a generous hand, dowered it with a superb setting: but the heart, the fire, and the voice of the European theatre from 1550 to 1780 were given to it by the actors.

By 1564 they had swept all over Europe, these magicians; and so tremendous was their force, so countless were their numbers, they were able to wander far afield and yet leave at home many thousands of their kind to enchant the princes and the people in Siena and in Rome, in Florence, in Perugia, in Naples, Pisa, and Verona.

They travelled far and wide—no trains, no motor cars then, and yet

these men of energy and genius carried their companies to Lyons, to Paris, to Madrid, to London, to Germany, to Vienna, and to Russia. For them the Seine and the Tagus and the Thames were willing to be set on fire. They inspired Molière, Shakespeare, and Lope de Verga; and having done all this, they had the amazing audacity to permit themselves to feel tired.

Then arose a good man and did an awful amount of harm. To be brief, he killed the great actors.

When actors grow lazy and loose they may expect defeat from a man who will take pains.

Carlo Goldoni was the good man who took pains.

Unless Molière had been actor first and foremost, he could never have evolved the comedies which later on flowed from him like extemporairé.

Now compare Goldoni for a moment with Molière.

Molière never took pains—was no good man. Molière was a kind of *gamin*, so passionately fond of the theatre that he made plays rather than wrote them: acting all the time—always acting and finally writing drama. Goldoni did not act in his own plays.

Goldoni was of a literary turn of mind and of a theatrical inclination. He wished very naturally to invent new characters for the Italians to see and hear. So the little advocate persuaded the chief actors to take it easy, and he wrote up the parts of the minor actors until it was these that the folk came to know, while they came to forget the principal figures of the Italian comedy.

These principal figures were: Arlecchino, Pantalone, il Dottore, Brighella, il Capitano, Pulcinella, Scaramuccia, Tartaglia, Coviello.

Two or more of these appeared in all comedies; they ruled the stage; they had been the glory of the Drama; they were not in any way like anything we have ever seen. They were at once actors and dramatists. They had but to decide the evening beforehand what tale they would act tomorrow, and all was done. A chair, a bottle, three rings, and a letter was all the paraphernalia they needed to complete their scene, which was a back-cloth and four to six side wings.

And the performance would be a remarkable one, remember. Not something one would suppose might easily result from such haste. For if there was rapidity in executing the work, beginning at 7 o'clock on Monday evening and being ready by 2 o'clock the following afternoon, we have it on record that these Italians had long been perfecting the whole art of spontaneous acting. They had given some centuries to it.

So conceive the astonishment and indignation of these masters of the

stage on finding a little advocate on their boards, writing for them what they considered milk-and-water plays with pretty enough dialogue, but lacking all the ancient virility of the masters of dramatic art—the old actor-dramatists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

But astonishment and fury gave way to sadness as these poor lazy descendants of the giants perceived that this same milk-and-water dramatist offered only the purest milk and the cleanest water. Then they recognized that the wine they had been serving out was but the dregs, the lees, of the old vat—and not too clean at that.

Goldoni was in the best sense of the word a respectable little Venetian gentleman. Molière, highly unrespectable, was just an inflammable torch set alight by the actors with whom later on he is willing to share his fire as theirs dwindle.

Not so Goldoni. Much as he is devoted to the theatre, he is never of it. There is therefore no more meaningless phrase to use to Goldoni than to call him the “Molière of Italy.”

He is just what he is—the Goldoni of Italy—and there is one only.

While Molière is purer “Commedia dell’arte,” more genuine theatre of the grand and traditional manner, Goldoni is pure Italian comedy and of a little kind which has never been equalled: it is the best of its kind.

Do I exaggerate when I say that I consider Goldoni the father of all good modern comedy, not only in that he is respectable—beyond reproach—but because he is mild and beautiful?

The days of fierce passions were past, it would seem. No longer was fun to be so terrible and so excruciating. The tears were no longer to be wrung from us as we rocked in our seats. The slapstick and the sack were all right in those ages when single combats between men counted: but when propaganda and the lie came into fashion as weapons the comedy had to change its tone. The old joke was of no more use.

Occasionally the old joke will even nowadays evoke the old roar; but that it is not popular with dramatists is, after all, some sort of a sign.

Goldoni has the true gaiety of a lovely mind.

And his characters are all so new to us, and his settings so original—so varied.

The very last thing anyone can call the author of *The Liar* is the “Molière of Italy”—the very last thing.

That is perhaps why everyone does it first of all. It is innocent and charming after all:

For who knows whether to know is as happy as to not know?

The wise really know nothing—and the fools too—and can anyone discern

one from t'other ? A clever man is he who can—yet not a wise one. Goldoni is not known by us—and Molière not known any better.

“Who is that ?” asks a Turk, pointing to a portrait of the author of *Tartuffe*.

“Why, Molière ! the great Molière—don't you recognize him ?”

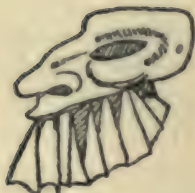
“Ah, Molière ? Of course, Molière—one of the *best* of Bonaparte's generals.”¹

And from the other end of the earth comes a young and charming lady to visit the Comedie Française to witness *Les Precieuses Ridicules*, and at the end of Act II turns with every sign of vivid emotion to her host and asks, “This Molière—how much will he accept to come and lecture at Stratford-upon-Avon ?”

I fear that I may be put down as a *clever* man, for I seem to know quite a lot about Goldoni—whereas really I know nothing about him—so in which category am I ?

Well, being in the company of the charming translators, I'll assume the title of wise man to please them.

¹ Adolphi Thalasso, *Molière en Turquie*.



THE LIAR

A COMEDY

First played in Mantua in the Spring of 1750

SCENE: VENICE DURING THE FESTA, MAY, 1750.

The action of the Play is continuous, and takes place within 24 hours.

ACT I.

SCENE 1: A Street. (*Evening.*)

SCENE 2: The same. (*Next morning.*)

ACT II.

SCENE 1: A Room in the Doctor's House.

SCENE 2: A Room in Pantalone's House.

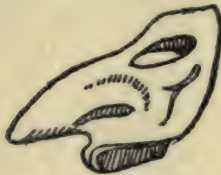
SCENE 3: A Street.

} (*Early afternoon.*)

ACT III.

SCENE 1: A Street. (*Late afternoon.*)

SCENE 2: A Room in the Doctor's House. (*That evening.*)



TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

In the original, Goldoni makes (as always) the traditional personages of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, such as Pantalone and Arlecchino, speak in the Venetian dialect. The translator has attempted to reproduce this distinction by rendering their dialogue in an English country dialect.

PERSONS IN THE PLAY.

DOCTOR BALANZONI	.	.	.	A Bolognese Doctor resident in Venice.
ROSAURA	}	.	.	His Daughters.
BEATRICE				
COLOMBINA	.	.	.	Their Maid.
OTTAVIO	.	.	.	A fine gentleman of Padua, lover to Beatrice.
FLORINDO	.	.	.	A Bolognese medical student, living in the Doctor's house, and timid lover of Rosaura.
BRIGHELLA	.	.	.	His Confidant.
PANTALONE	.	.	.	A Venetian merchant, Father to—
LELIO	.	.	.	The Liar.
ARLECCHINO	.	.	.	His Servant.
A NEAPOLITAN DRIVER.				
A DRAPER'S ASSISTANT.				
A LETTER CARRIER.				
A SINGING WOMAN.				
INSTRUMENTALISTS.				
PEOTA* BOATMEN and				
GONDOLIERS.				

The action takes place in Venice during a Festa.

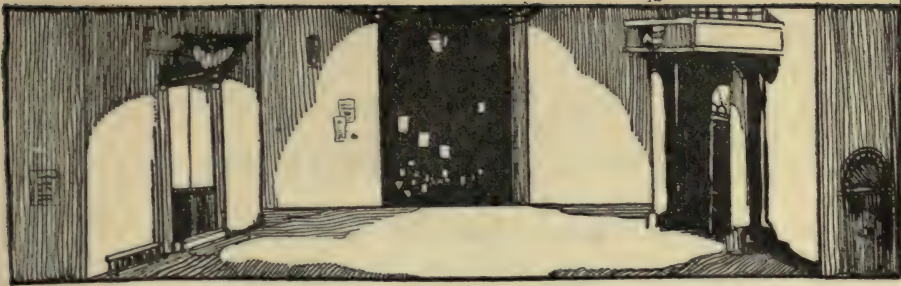
* A peota is a rather roomy boat, built to hold a great many people, covered by a red canopy, with a table and chairs. Used for short pleasure excursions and diversions within the city.





LELIO.

Esquisse par M. de Lamoignon



THE LIAR

ACT I.

SCENE: *A street ending in a bridge, through the arch of which a canal is seen. L., the Doctor's House, with a small projecting balcony. R., and directly opposite, an Inn with an Eagle sign-board.*

A Moonlight Night.

(At rise a peota is seen moored under the archway. It is lit by coloured lanterns, and in it are seated INSTRUMENTALISTS and the SINGING WOMAN. The INSTRUMENTALISTS play an opening symphony. FLORINDO and BRIGHELLA stand down stage in the shadows.)

(During the music BEATRICE and ROSAURA come out on to the balcony.)

FLOR.: Look, Brighella, there's my dear Rosaura coming out for the serenade with her sister Beatrice. Now's the moment for that song I wrote explaining my passion for her.

BRIG.: I never zeed a more stränge luvè than yours. Your Worship's fair in luvè with Miss Rosaura; you live a-studying in the same house with her fâther, and you've a mort of chances to speak to her, and you must needs have it zung to her in a zurri-nâde and explained in a zong.

FLOR. : My dear Brighella, I've already told you that I haven't the courage. You know I love Rosaura, but I can't pluck up heart enough to tell her so. If I were to speak outright to her I know I should simply die of blushing.

BRIG. : Do 'ee mean carrying on like this wi'out a zingle spoken word ?

FLOR. : Oh, go to the boat and tell them to sing my new song.

BRIG. : Now, look 'ee : I sarved your fäther in Bologna, I zeed your Worship born and wish 'ee well enough, God knows. Why, when I look at 'ee, I think I zee old Mäster 'isself standin' afore my very eyes. Ay, and though now I'm in sarvice out o' the family, ye know your Worship is main welcome to my späre time.

FLOR. : My dear fellow, if you really mean it, do as I ask you.

BRIG. : Have it your own wäy.

FLOR. : And I'll stay here out of sight.

BRIG. : Wauns ! where's the sense in that ?

FLOR. : So that no one will see me, of course.

BRIG. (*aside*) : It fair beats me ! 'Taint näatural. There beant much o' that about nowädays.

(Goes to the peota.)

FLOR. : Dear Rosaura, my soul, my only hope, couldst thou but guess this devouring flame !

(Withdraws still more into the shadow.)

(The INSTRUMENTALISTS play the introduction to song, which is then sung from the boat by the SINGING WOMAN.)

SONG.

Dear idol of my heart,
 I take this timid fashion
 Quite safely to impart
 My soul-devouring passion.
 Dear Cupid, understand
 My shyness makes me proffer
 A love at second-hand,
 And in a song my offer.

But when you are away,
 My courage then is stout ;
 When you're not by to hear,
 My love I simply shout.
 O Cupid, be at hand
 And cure my cursèd evil,
 And make her understand
 My shyness is the devil.

(While the song is being sung, LELIO and ARLECCHINO come out from Inn and stand listening to the music. At the conclusion of the song, the boat moves slowly off, the MUSICIANS still playing.)

BRIG. *(softly to FLORINDO)* : And does that pläze 'ee ?

FLOR. : Very much.

BRIG. : Went with a swing like ?

FLOR. : Couldn't have been better.

BRIG. : But *she* don't know whose it wäs.

FLOR. : Never mind ; it is enough that she should have heard it.

BRIG. : Go 'ee in now, and let her zee this finery is your Worship's.

FLOR. : Heaven forbid ! And it's just to prevent this that I shall now take a turn or two, and then go in by the back door. Come along.

BRIG. : Have it your own wäy !

(Exeunt.)

LELIO : Well, what do you think of it, Arlecchino ? Charming place, this Venice. Always something delightful to do. Now that it's really too hot to sleep, one can come out and enjoy these delicious serenades.

ARLE. : Why, as to that, I don't value 'em a groat.

LELIO : How's that ?

ARLE. : The zort of zurrinädes I value 'as eatin' thrown in.

LELIO *(with sudden interest)* : I say, Arlecchino, look at that

couple of girls up there. I saw them from my window, and though 'twas pretty dark I thought they looked handsome enough.

ARLE : Ay, they're all fine women to you. Why, Mrs. Cleonice in Rome fair dazzled you, and now you've left her.

LELIO : And don't even remember her ! On that balcony are two women whom I have every reason to suppose are of a not too retiring disposition. I'll try my luck.

ARLE : Meanin' thereby you'll tell 'un ten lies to every four words.

LELIO : You presume.

ARLE : Best get 'ee home to Master Pantalone's.

LELIO : He's out of town. When he gets back I'll go stay with him right enough.

ARLE. (*pointing to Inn*) : And meanwhile you'll stop at the Eagle ?

LELIO : Yes, and enjoy some liberty. Why, this is the season. All junketings and enjoyment. I've been away for twenty years. How exquisite those girls look by the light of the moon. All the same, I should like to know who they are before I speak to them. Go into the Inn and find out who they are, if they're presentable, and what their names are.

ARLE : I want a month for all this stuff !

LELIO : Hurry up ; I'll wait for you here.

ARLE : You want me to go a-pryin', you do.

LELIO : I beat you when I'm angry.

ARLE : Well, I hates to zee you put about, so here goes.

(*Exit into Inn.*)

LELIO : I think to-night I'm in the vein for a new adventure.
(*Begins to walk up and down.*)

ROSAURA : You're right, sister, the serenade could not have been more magnificent.

BEAT. : I can't think of anyone else in the neighbourhood that's worth it, so I flatter myself 'twas meant for us.

ROSAURA : I wish we knew for which one of us, and who it was ordered it.

BEAT. : Some unknown admirer of your beauty. (*Yawns.*)

ROSAURA (*sweetly*) : Or rather, dear, some secret admirer of your worth.

BEAT. : I can't think who it can be. There's Signor Ottavio, who seemed rather smitten with me, but if he'd ordered it he'd hardly be the one to hide himself.

ROSAURA : I can't think either. It wouldn't be Florindo. Several times lately I've gone out of my way to speak quite nicely to him, and he's never responded in the least.

BEAT. : Do you see a man strolling over there ?

ROSAURA : Yes, and, as far as you can tell by this wretched moonlight, he seems rather well dressed.

LELIO (*to himself as he strolls*) : Arlecchino's a damned long time. I don't know who they are or how to talk to them. Never mind, I'll keep on safe ground.

ROSAURA : Let's go in.

BEAT. : Oh, nonsense ; what are you afraid of ?

LELIO (*speaking towards the balcony*) : Glorious serenity of the heavenly vault ! What a quiet and yet resplendent night. And yet, what marvel is it that the heavens shine more than their wont, when to-night they are illumined by two such gracious stars ?

ROSAURA (*low to BEATRICE*) : He means us.

BEAT. (*low*) : He's either mad or in love with us.

ROSAURA (*low*) : He seems a good figure of a man, and speaks with vast taste.

LELIO : Did I not fear the stigma of boldness, I should venture to wish you ladies a very good evening.

ROSAURA : You honour us.

LELIO : You are enjoying the air ?

BEAT. : We are enjoying a little liberty in our father's absence.

LELIO : Ah, your father's out of town ?

BEAT. : Yes, sir.

ROSAURA : Do you know our father ?

LELIO : He's a great friend of mine. May I be permitted to inquire where he's gone ?

ROSAURA : To Padua, on a visit to a sick man.

LELIO (*aside*): Doctor's daughters. (*Aloud.*) I've always considered the doctor a great man, an ornament to our century.

ROSAURA: You're very kind. You seem to know all about us, but who are you?

LELIO: I am an adorer of your charms.

ROSAURA (*coughs*): Of mine?

LELIO: Of those of one of you, my ladies.

BEAT.: Won't you be more particular?

LELIO: Permit me still to keep my secret. In good time I hope to explain myself.

ROSAURA (*aside to BEATRICE*): He wants to marry one of us.

BEAT. (*aside to ROSAURA*): Heaven knows who'll be the lucky one.

(*Enter ARLECCHINO from Inn.*)

ARLE.: (*looking for LELIO*): Where's he got to now?

LELIO (*aside to ARLECCHINO*): Well, found out their names?

ARLE.: The wäiter told me all about 'un.

LELIO: Quick!

ARLE.: They're the därters of—

LELIO (*interrupting him*): I don't want to know that. What are their names?

ARLE.: Steady now. Their fäther's a doctor.

LELIO: Oh, I know that. Tell me their names and be damned to you!

ARLE.: One's called Rosaura and t'other Beatrice.

LELIO: That's enough. (*Returns to under the balcony.*) Excuse me—I had given my servant a commission to execute.

ROSAURA: Are you a Venetian or a stranger here?

LELIO: I am a Neapolitan nobleman.

ARLE. (*aside*): Nobleman and Neapolitan! Two lies at a go.

ROSAURA: How d'you know us?

LELIO: It is now a year since this city has sheltered my incognito.

ARLE. (*aside*): We coomed läst night.

LELIO: I'd hardly arrived before my eyes were enchanted by the beauties of Mesdames Rosaura and Beatrice. I was for a long

while in doubt upon which to bestow my heart, as both seemed equally worthy of it, but finally my choice resolved itself upon——

ROSAURA (*interrupting*): Which one of us?

LELIO: Ah, I mustn't say that yet.

ARLE. (*aside*): He'll tell 'un both in turn.

LELIO: Besides, I fear the beauty I desire is already bespoken.

ROSAURA: I assure you I have no lovers.

BEAT.: Neither am I in any way engaged.

ARLE. (*low to LELIO*): Two empty places, just your luck!

LELIO: Still, serenades are sung beneath your windows.

ROSAURA: I swear I don't know whose it was.

BEAT.: I can't guess either.

LELIO: Now, would you really like to know?

ROSAURA: I'm dying of curiosity.

BEAT.: We are women, and that is enough.

LELIO: Well, well, I'll relieve you of your torments. The serenade that you enjoyed is a little testimonial of the affection I cherish for my fair one.

ARLE. (*aside*): Wauns! That's a mouthful!

ROSAURA: And you won't say for whom you meant it?

LELIO: No, certainly not. Did not you mark that canzonetta that I caused to be sung? Did it not speak of a timid and secret lover? That is precisely what I am.

ROSAURA: You've only yourself to blame, then, if neither of us thanks you.

LELIO: So slight a mark of esteem deserves no thanks. Have I the honour of secretly serving her whom I love, I will astound all Venice with the magnificence of my entertainment.

ARLE. (*aside*): He'll be pawning his clothes, if his father don't come back soon.

ROSAURA (*low to BEATRICE*): My dear, he must be a very rich man.

BEAT. (*low to ROSAURA*): He'll not be for me: I'm too unlucky.

ROSAURA: Sir, at least tell us your name.

LELIO: With pleasure: Don Asdrubale, Marquess of Castel d'Oro.

ARLE. (*aside*): No lack of titles wi' *him*.

BEAT. (*low to ROSAURA*): Let's go in; he mustn't think us low.

ROSAURA (*low to BEATRICE*): You're right. Prudence by all means. (*Aloud to LELIO.*) My lord Marquess, with your permission—the air grows chilly.

LELIO: You're going in already?

BEAT.: Our old duenna is calling us; we must go to bed.

LELIO: Patience, Asdrubale! Your comfort leaves you.

ROSAURA: We shall meet again.

LELIO: If you'll allow me, I'll wait on you to-morrow.

ARLE. (*aside*): Yes, inside next time.

ROSAURA: That's all very well, sir timid lover, but it is not so easy to come in here.

LELIO: At least I'll see you at the window?

ROSAURA: We'll allow you that much.

BEAT.: And when you've declared yourself, you'll be admitted a little further.

LELIO: When your father returns we will talk of it. Meanwhile—

ROSAURA: I wish your lordship a very good night.

(*Goes into house through window.*)

BEAT.: Don Astrubale, your servant!

(*Follows ROSAURA.*)

ARLE. (*to LELIO, laughing*): I kiss your Gräceship's händs!

LELIO: What do you think of that: That was not so bad?

ARLE.: The wäy you manage to tell the peck o' lies you do wi'out fair tänglin' yourself just gets me!

LELIO: Idiot! These are not lies, but witty inventions produced by the fertility of my ever-ready and prolific brain. If you would enjoy the world, use your wits, or you'll lose all your opportunities.

(*Goes into the Inn.*)

ARLE. : Won't the fät be in the fire when his fäther comes bäck : it don't need no Dänial to tell thät !

(COLOMBINA comes out on to balcony.)

COLOM. : Now that my ladies are gone to bed, I can take a breath of air.

ARLE. : Hullo ! here's a girl on the balcony—it's not one of the others.

COLOM. : A man is strolling down there and looking at me. It's time I looked after myself a bit, too.

ARLE. : Let's try her with a bit o' the Mäster's flummery.

COLOM. : He's going to speak to me.

ARLE. (*dropping dialect*) : I—ah—worship that beauty which gleams equally by night and though unseen strikes love into one's heart.

COLOM. : Sir, who are you ?

ARLE. : Don Piccaro—of Catalania, at your service.

COLOM. (*aside*) : " Don " is a nobleman's title !

ARLE. : I am one that dies, agonises and becomes mad for love of you.

COLOM. : But I don't know you.

ARLE. : That's because I'm a timid and a shamefaced lover.

COLOM. : You can speak freely with me ; I'm only a poor servant girl.

ARLE. (*aside*) : A servant : that's *my* mark ! (*Aloud.*) Tell me, my dear, did you hear that—ah—canzonetta sung ?

COLOM. : Yes, sir, I heard it.

ARLE. : Do you know who sang it ?

COLOM. : No, I don't.

ARLE. : *I* sang it.

COLOM. : It sounded like a woman's voice.

ARLE. : I'm one of those that can sing in all voices. My high notes run a good two octaves above the highest in the harpsichord.

COLOM. : It was really a beautiful song.

ARLE. : I wrote it.

COLOM. : So you're a poet as well ?

ARLE. : I, too, have drunk Parn Asses' milk.*

COLOM. : But what made you take so much trouble ?

ARLE. : Why, you of course, my dear.

COLOM. : I should grow vain if I thought you were speaking the truth.

ARLE. : You may believe me—I swear it by all the patents of my nobility.

COLOM. : I thank you with all my heart.

ARLE. : What would I not do for the sake of your eyes !

COLOM. (*towards house*) : Coming ! coming ! (*To ARLECCHINO.*)
My lord, my ladies are calling me.

ARLE. : Ah, do not deprive me of the rubicund shades of your beauty.

COLOM. : I'm afraid I can't stop any longer.

ARLE. : I shall see you again ?

COLOM. : Of course. Don Piccaro, I salute you.

(*Goes into house.*)

ARLE. (*lapsing into dialect once more*) : None zo bäd. There's something in it : live wi' the wolf and learn to howl.

(*Exit into Inn.*)

END OF SCENE I.

SCENE II. *The Same. Next morning.*

BRIG. : There 'ee go, zurrenädin' äll night, up wi' the lärk in the morning. You'm lovers has sim'ly no sleepin' time.

FLO. : I could not sleep when I thought of the success of my serenade.

BRIG. : Success d'ye cäll it ? Spend your money, lose your sleep, änd the gal know nowt !

* In the original Goldoni puns on the words *musa*, a muse, and *mussa*, a she-ass in the Venetian dialect.

FLOR. : I ask no more than that she should have enjoyed it.

BRIG. : Ye're content with main little.

FLOR. : Listen, Brighella, I heard my dear Rosaura say the other day that she desired some lengths of laces. Now that the fair's beginning, I should like to make her a present of some.

BRIG. : This'll speak sommat to 'un.

FLOR. : Oh, they'll not come from me. Dear Brighella, if you love me, do what I'm going to ask you. Here's a purse of ten zecchins, go to the mercer's and buy with it forty yards of the most beautiful laces you can. Tell the merchant to have them sent to Rosaura with the particular instruction on no account to say from whom they come.

BRIG. : Ten zecchins in the gutter !

FLOR. : How's that ?

BRIG. : Whoi, how be she to know wheer they be from ?
Ye can't expect thanks like.

FLOR. : It doesn't matter, she'll know in time. Just now I wish to be a secret giver.

BRIG. : Wheer be the money from ?

FLOR. : Some from my father's allowance and some from my client's fees.

BRIG. : Ye gäther 'un and ye scätter 'un.

FLOR. : Do go at once and do me this favour. To-day is the first day of the fair. I should like her to have the laces before dinner-time.

BRIG. : Häve it your own wäy.

FLOR. : See that the laces are beautiful.

BRIG. : Ay, ay !

FLOR. : I shall be eternally grateful.

BRIG. (*aside*) : Ten zecchins—why, a män might häve the world.

(*Exit.*)

FLOR. : And there is the dear little balcony where my love shows herself. D'you know, if she should now appear, I believe I could speak to her. I might say, for instance—

(OTTAVIO enters from R., and stands watching FLORINDO.)

Yes, I'd say to her: "Madam, I love you tenderly; I cannot live without you. You are my soul. Dear, take pity on me." (*Turns and sees OTTAVIO.*) Lud! I wish he had not seen me. (*Aloud to OTTAVIO.*) My friend, what do you think of the architecture of this little balcony?

OTTAVIO: Beautiful! Tell me now, are you an architect or a portrait painter?

FLOR.: What do you mean?

OTTAVIO: Are you contemplating the balcony or the fair owner?

FLOR.: I don't understand you.

OTTAVIO: You've better opportunities indoors.

FLOR.: I am a doctor, not a painter.

OTTAVIO: My dear fellow, did you hear the serenade here last night?

FLOR.: I go to bed early; I know nothing of any serenade.

OTTAVIO: But someone saw you go by as it was being sung.

FLOR.: I may have passed by. I know nothing. I have no mistresses.

OTTAVIO (*aside*): He's growing confused. I believe that serenade was his.

FLOR.: Sir, your servant. (*Attempts to leave.*)

OTTAVIO (*stopping him*): One moment, please. We're friends, you know—don't hide the truth from me. I love Beatrice, and find no difficulty in telling you so. If you love Rosaura, perhaps I can help you; if you love Beatrice, I'm quite ready to give her up to you if she prefers you.

FLOR.: I tell you once more I've nothing to do with love. I devote myself to surgery and medicine, and pay no attention to women.

OTTAVIO: Well, I don't believe you. I often hear you sighing, and no one sighs for medicine.

FLOR.: Well, don't believe me if you don't want to. I tell you once more I love no one, and if I was gazing at that

—window it was because I was attracted by the gracefulness of its design.

(*Looks at the window and exits.*)

OTTAVIO : There's no doubt about it, he's in love ; and, as he won't tell me anything, I'm afraid it's Beatrice. If I had not spent the night at the Inn and lost it miserably in play, I should have seen Florindo, and doubtless things would have been a bit clearer. But I'll keep my eyes open anyway.

(*Enter LELIO from Inn.*)

LELIO : Why, whom have we here ? My dear friend Ottavio !

OTTAVIO : My dearest Lelio !

LELIO : So you're here ?

OTTAVIO : So you've returned to your ancestral home ?

LELIO : Yes, I arrived yesterday.

OTTAVIO : How did you tear yourself from the amorous beams of Naples ?

LELIO : Ah, truly it was sad work leaving so many beauties behind. But barely arrived in Venice, the gallant adventures that here befell me have made me forget all the Neapolitan beauties.

OTTAVIO : Glad to hear it—always lucky in love.

LELIO : Fortune is sometimes just, and Love not always blind.

OTTAVIO : I know ; and 'tis your merit that enriches you with these local loves.

LELIO : Tell me, do you know this city ?

OTTAVIO : Slightly. I've lived here a year.

LELIO : Do you know two sisters that live in that house ?

OTTAVIO (*aside*) : H'm ! I must see how the land lies. (*Aloud.*) No, I don't know them.

LELIO : My friend, they are two lovely girls. One is called Rosaura and the other Beatrice ; they are daughters of a medico, and are both of them in love with me.

OTTAVIO : What, both of them ?

LELIO : Both of them. What's strange in that ?

OTTAVIO : How d'ye manage it so quickly ?

LELIO : They'd hardly seen me when they first nodded to me and then invited me to speak to them.

OTTAVIO (*aside*) : Can this possibly be true ?

LELIO : Very few words from me sufficed to enchant them, and they both declared themselves my admirers.

OTTAVIO : Not both of them ?

LELIO : Both of them !

OTTAVIO (*aside*) : I tremble with jealousy !

LELIO : They invited me to enter——

OTTAVIO (*aside*) : Still more !

LELIO : But as the evening approached, I took it into my head to provide them with a magnificent entertainment, and so took my leave.

OTTAVIO : Perhaps you had a serenade played for them ?

LELIO : Exactly ! How did you know ?

OTTAVIO : I heard of it. (*Aside.*) Now I've discovered who is responsible for the serenade. Florindo was right, after all.

LELIO : But the serenade did not conclude last night's entertainment.

OTTAVIO (*ironically*) : Bravo, Sir Lelio. What fine thing did you do then ?

LELIO : I descended from the boat, and caused a magnificent supper to be unloaded by my servants, and, being admitted by the two courteous sisters, the night was finished amid plates and bottles.

OTTAVIO : My friend, I do not wish to doubt your honesty, and I can only suppose you are trying to amuse yourself at my expense, but you can't expect me to believe all this.

LELIO : Does it seem extraordinary to you ? Where's your difficulty in believing this ?

OTTAVIO : It is surely not so common a thing that two honest and civil girls should take advantage of their father's absence to open their doors to a stranger and turn their house into a brothel !

(*Enter ARLECCHINO.*)

LELIO : Here is my servant. Ask him if I speak the truth.

OTTAVIO (*aside*): It is incredible that they should have committed such a weakness!

LELIO: Tell me, Arlecchino, where were we last night?

ARLE: Just a-gettin' a mouthful of air like.

LELIO: Did I not talk from under this balcony to two ladies?

ARLE: Ay, thät's so.

LELIO: Did I not order a serenade?

ARLE: In course, and I säng the canzonetta.

LELIO: And we supped afterwards?

ARLE: Sooped?

LELIO: Yes, a great supper in the house of the ladies Beatrice and Rosaura. (*Signs to him to say yes.*)

ARLE: Yes, sir, with the ladies.

LELIO: Wasn't it a magnificent supper?

ARLE: Ay, a rare blow-out, so it were.

LELIO (*to OTTAVIO*): You see, he confirms every detail.

OTTAVIO: I don't know what to say; you're a very lucky man!

LELIO: I don't like to boast, but luck is hardly the chief factor in my successes.

OTTAVIO: To what do you attribute them, then?

LELIO: Be it said with all due modesty, to some slight merit of my own.

OTTAVIO: Yes, I grant you you're a lad of spirit and of parts. I had occasion in Naples to admire your wit. But to bring two sisters to your feet at once—really this seems too much.

LELIO: Ah, my friend, you shall see more than that.

OTTAVIO: Some other time we will amuse ourselves. At present, if you will permit me, I must go to my lodging to fetch money to pay my losses of last night. (*Going towards Inn.*)

LELIO: Where do you lodge?

OTTAVIO: In this Inn.

LELIO (*aside*): The devil! (*Aloud.*) I'm staying there, too; but I neither saw you yesterday nor during the night.

OTTAVIO: I went out to dine and played the night through.

LELIO: You've lived here some time and don't know these ladies?

OTTAVIO : I know them by sight, but have not the honour of their acquaintance. (*Aside.*) I must not disclose myself.

LELIO : Listen ! If ever you should meet these ladies, do not, I warn you, betray to them the confidence I have made you. These are things one does in secret. I should never have confided in any but a bosom friend.

OTTAVIO : Till our next meeting.

LELIO : Your servant.

OTTAVIO (*aside*) : I cannot believe them capable of such lightness !

(*Exit.*)

ARLE. : Märk me, mäster, you'll get bit !

LELIO : You fool, back me up and don't think of other things !

ARLE. : See here, mäster, let's fix on a sign ; when you be going to tell a lie like——

LELIO (*interrupting*) : Dolted ass ! When I want to utter some witty invention——

ARLE. : Well, when you be a-goin' to say some witty invention, tip us the wink so I can bäck 'ee up like.

LELIO : Your stupidity incommodes me vastly.

ARLE. : Well, this ways, when you be a-wantin' me to bäck you up, clear 'ee throat like.

LELIO : Is it so difficult to follow me ?

ARLE. : I do get that mäzed, so I do ; when to speak and when to keep mum.

(*Enter ROSAURA and COLOMBINA from the house, both masked.*)

LELIO : I say, look at those two masks, Arlecchino.

ARLE. : Carnival seemingly.

LELIO : Here on the first day of the fair they always wear masks in the morning.

ARLE. : Who can they be ?

LELIO : Oh, those two girls I spoke to last night.

ARLE. : I dön't like these covered mugs.

LELIO : Ladies, 'tis useless to veil your faces to conceal your

beauty while the transcendent beams from your eyes suffice to betray you.

ROSAURA (*indicating* COLOMBINA) : Do you mean her, too ?

LELIO : I am pledged for the moment not to distinguish between one sister and another.

ROSAURA : But this is my maid.

ARLE. : My bit o' goods, mäster.

LELIO : Is it a great matter that I should mistake a mask ?

ROSAURA (*dryly*) : But I noticed that the beams from Colombina's eyes created the same impression as those from mine.

LELIO : Madam, now that I can speak freely to you, I will tell you that you only are the one who inspires all my admiration, that you entirely occupy my heart, and that if I spoke in equal terms of her whom I believed to be your sister, I did so without admiring her.

ROSAURA : And so you can distinguish me from my sister though I am masked ?

LELIO : Of course. I should love you little indeed if I could not tell you apart.

ROSAURA : And how do you know me ?

LELIO : By your voice, your figure, your noble and majestic air, the spirit in your eyes, and by my heart which is ignorant of the art of lying.

ROSAURA : For pity's sake, tell me who am I ?

LELIO : You are my idol.

ROSAURA : Yes, I know. But what is my name ?

LELIO (*aside*) : Here's for it. (*Aloud.*) Rosaura.

ROSAURA (*unmasking*) : Bravo ! Now I see you really know me.

LELIO (*aside to* ARLECCHINO) : Luck was with me that time. Look, Arlecchino, what an amiable countenance !

ARLE. (*to himself*) : Wauns ! I'd gie summat for a peep at t'other !

ROSAURA : Then you really love me ?

LELIO : I, Asdrubale, cannot lie. I love you, I adore you. When you are from me I can do nothing but repeat your name. (*To* ARLECCHINO.) Isn't that true ?

ARLE. (*to himself*) : One peep ahind that mask !

LELIO (*coughing*): Answer me; isn't it true?

ARLE. (*carelessly*): Ay, right, mäster.

ROSAURA: Then why haven't you declared yourself before this?

LELIO: I will tell you, my dear. My father wished to marry me in Naples to a Palerman lady, and I, who abhorred instead of loving her, left the city rather than be forced into so hateful a match. Subsequently, I informed my father of the flame with which your beauty had inspired me, and only yesterday received his letter of consent.

ROSAURA: I find it difficult to believe that your father should consent to your marriage with a doctor's daughter.

LELIO (*coughing*): It is nevertheless true.

ARLE.: Ay, mäm, ye may take it as gospel; I read the letter.

ROSAURA: But I'm afraid the dowry my father can give me is hardly suited to one of your position.

LELIO: The House of Castel d'Oro needs no dowry. For twenty years my father has been collecting jewels, gold and silver against my wedding-day. You will be a wealthy bride.

ROSAURA: You astonish me, and the grandeur which you flaunt before my eyes makes me fear that you are making game of me.

LELIO: Heaven forbid that I should speak falsely. I am incapable of altering the truth in the slightest degree. From my youth upwards there is not a person who can reproach me with even the most trivial taradiddle. (ARLECCHINO *laughs*.) Ask my servant. (*Coughs*.)

ARLE.: Mäster's truthfulness itself.

ROSAURA: When may I hope for some proof of the truth of what you tell me?

LELIO: As soon as ever your father returns to Venice.

ROSAURA: I shall then see if you really love me with a loyal heart.

LELIO: Ah! you'll find no sincerer man than I.

(*Enter a DRAPER'S ASSISTANT with a box of laces.*)

ASSIST.: This should be the doctor's house. (*Prepares to knock.*)

ROSAURA (*to Assistant*): Who do you want?

ASSIST.: If you please, Madame Mask, is this the house of Doctor Balanzoni?

ROSAURA: Yes. Who are you looking for?

ASSIST.: I have goods to deliver to Madame Rosaura, his daughter.

ROSAURA: I am she. What goods? Who from?

ASSIST.: There are forty yards of Blonde lace. My master bade me bring them to you, but neither he nor I know the person who bought them.

ROSAURA: If that's the case, you may take them back again. I don't receive things without knowing from whom they come.

ASSIST.: I have strict orders to leave them here in any case. If you do not choose to receive them in the street, I'll knock and take them inside.

ROSAURA: And I tell you I absolutely will not have them!

ASSIST.: They're paid for; they cost ten zecchins.

ROSAURA: Who sends them?

ASSIST.: I don't know—some good gentleman.

ROSAURA: Then I won't have them.

LELIO: Mistress Rosaura, I admire your delicacy. Take the laces without an afterthought; and, as you refuse to take them without knowing whence they come, you force me to tell you that they are a slight token of my esteem.

ASSIST.: You see? This gentleman bought them.

(ARLECCHINO *is lost in admiration.*)

ROSAURA (*to LELIO*): A present from you?

LELIO: Yes, madam, and I wished to give it you anonymously so as to have no cause to blush in offering you so trivial a thing.

ASSIST.: Sir, you'll not find better goods anywhere.

LELIO: Well, I'm a man of taste and spend my money to advantage.

ARLE. (*aside*): Ananias!

ROSAURA: I accept your gracious gift. Believe me, these laces are excessively dear to me. As it happened, I meant to buy

some, but of course not such fine ones as these. Take them, Colombina; to-morrow you shall begin to arrange them on a dress.

(COLOMBINA takes the box from the Assistant.)

ASSIST. : Anything else, Sir ?

LELIO : No. Go.

ASSIST. : Sir, to drink your honour's health.

LELIO : Go. I'll see you later.

ASSIST. (to ROSAURA) : Madam, I served you punctually.

ROSAURA : Wait, I'll give you——

LELIO (*interrupting haughtily*) : Madam, you astonish me. This is my affair !

ASSIST. (to LELIO) : Many, many thanks.

LELIO : Go. I'll see you later.

ASSIST. (*aside, as he goes out*) : I understand. Never see him again.

(Exit.)

ROSAURA : With your permission, I'll go in now.

LELIO : So I'm not to have the honour of squiring you to-day ?

ROSAURA : Not just yet. I only came out masked like this to see you and to speak to you, to hear from your own lips that it was really I who was favoured by your choice. Now that I am quite satisfied, I must go in again.

LELIO : You take my heart with you.

ROSAURA : And what am I to say to my sister ?

LELIO : For the moment nothing at all.

ROSAURA : I'll be silent because you bid me.

LELIO : Little wife, love me with all your heart.

ROSAURA : Wife ? I still rather doubt that.

LELIO : My word is a contract.

ROSAURA : Time will judge.

(Exit unto house.)

COLOM. (*aside*) : That little blackamoor looks like the man

who spoke to me last night, but those clothes don't belong to a gentleman. This wants looking into.

(*Exit into house.*)

ARLE. : Damnation! She's off and I haven't seen her face!

LELIO : What do you think of Rosaura's beauty? Isn't it a masterpiece?

ARLE. : Ay! and your honour's a masterpiece of witty inventions.

LELIO : I suspect she has an unknown lover who is too bashful to bid openly for her favours.

ARLE. : I'll get a chance to come up wi' 'un.

LELIO : It would be madness not to profit by so excellent an opportunity.

(*Enter COLOMBINA from house without her mask or domino.*)

ARLE. : Hey, but here she cooms again!

LELIO : Make what use you can of her. Get her to help me with her mistress.

ARLE. : 'Ee maun teach me some lies.

LELIO : Nature teaches them to everyone.

ARLE. : Mäm, if I don't mistake 'ee, 'ee be the young person of last night!

COLOM. : I am the young person of last night, of yesterday, and of twenty years ago.

ARLE. : That's good! (*Chuckles.*) I'm the läd that made those fine speeches to 'ee last night.

COLOM. : Don Piccaro?

ARLE. : Your sarvent.

COLOM. : You will excuse me, but I cannot believe it. You don't look it.

ARLE. : But I *be*. I'm a gentleman, fine and great—and rich. If ye dön't believe me—ask him, my friend here. (*Coughs.*)

COLOM. : God bless you!

ARLE. : Thank 'ee. (*Reproachfully to LELIO.*) Mäster, I coughed.

LELIO (*aside to ARLECCHINO*) : Hurry up and come along.

ARLE. (*aside to LELIO*) : Bean't you a-goin' to bäck up *my* witty inventions, too ?

COLOM. (*to ARLECCHINO*) : Where d'you come from ?

ARLE. : From the great town of Rome. I'm first cousin to all th' nobility and I've sarvents in all ends o' the glöbe. (*Coughing loudly.*)

COLOM. : God bless you.

ARLE. : It's the bäcca, läss. (*Aside to LELIO.*) Bean't you a-goin' to help me ?

LELIO (*aside to ARLECCHINO*) : You lay it on too thick, you do.

ARLE. (*aside to LELIO*) : Your'n bean't too easy to swallow !

COLOM. : My lord Marquis, who loves my lady, has made her a fine present. If you value me you'll do the same.

ARLE. : At your sarvice. Go 'ee to the fair an' choose what ye list—I'll päy. Anything up to hälf a million.

COLOM. : Really, this is *too* much !

(Exit angrily into house.)

LELIO : Didn't I tell you ? You're a fool !

ARLE. : If ye mäun tell lies, tell 'un big.

LELIO : Hurry up, I want to go into the inn. I'm all impatience to tell Ottavio my new adventure.

ARLE. : Shouldn't tell 'un too much if I was you.

LELIO : The greatest pleasure of a lover lies in being able to recount the favours of his fair one with pride.

ARLE. : Wi' shäme, too.

LELIO : The telling of amorous adventures lacks flavour without a spice of romance.

(Goes into Inn.)

ARLE. : Here goes for more witty inventions !

(Follows LELIO into the Inn.)

(A gondola draws up at the foot of the street, from which disembark PANTALONE and the DOCTOR.)

DOCTOR : If you saw him, you wouldn't recognise him ?

PANTA : Naturally, he went away a boy ; but they do say he be a fine gentleman now, truly.

DOCTOR : I'm glad to hear it. And my girl will be even more pleased.

PANTA : Wonder to me is ye häven't määrried 'un off afore now.

DOCTOR : Well, the fact of the matter is, I have a pupil staying with me, a certain Florindo—good family, excellent manners. I always meant her for him, but I'm resolved to dispose of her elsewhere as I find him so opposed to matrimony and a confirmed woman-hater. Fortunately, I came to you, and in four words we concluded the best bargain in the world.

PANTA : And don't 'ee mean to märry t'other 'un, too ?

DOCTOR : Now that I'm settling Rosaura, I should like to get the other off my hands.

PANTA : Ay, right ! Gals in a house an' no mother, be no good.

DOCTOR : Well, there's Don Ottavio of Padua would take her, but I've always refused him as I did not want the elder left behind. Now perhaps I'll give her to him.

PANTA : Ay, I know 'un, and his fäther and all the fam'ly. Ye'll get a good bargain.

DOCTOR : You confirm my resolution to give her to him. Many thanks for having brought me so far in your gondola. I'll go in now and begin to put the matter to my daughters, especially to Rosaura, in whom, if I am not mistaken, I discern a great leaning towards matrimony.

(Opens the house door and goes in.)

PANTA : Ay, few of 'un wi'out *that*. Some fur a better house, some fur more liberty, and some fur two-a-bed.

(Enter LELIO from Inn, followed by a Coachman.)

COACH : Look here, sir. I wonder you're not ashamed to give me such a beggarly tip for driving you from Naples to Venice.

LELIO : A tip is a courtesy and not obligatory ; I'm sure I meant you well with what I gave you.

COACH. : Tips are our wages. I expected at least three pounds for the distance.

PANTA. (*aside*) : This gem'man be from Naples way—maybe he knows my boy.

LELIO : Well, if you don't like your tip, give it me back and I'll give you a dozen strokes of my cane in exchange.

COACH. : If we weren't in Venice, I'd soon show you what Neapolitan coachmen are.

LELIO : Oh, go away ; don't make a noise !

COACH. : That's what you get for driving these would-be gentlemen !

(*Exit.*)

LELIO : Insolent ! I'll break your head ! (*Aside.*) I'd better let him go though.

PANTA. (*aside*) : Suppose it's my boy !

LELIO : Coachmen ! They're never satisfied. They'd like to fleece us poor strangers.

PANTA. (*aside*) : I'll go slow and larn what I can. (*Aloud.*) Axin' your pardon, sir, you be come from Naples ?

LELIO : Yes, sir.

PANTA. : I've a sight o' customers an' friends there. I write there to several o' the quality. If so be your honour's one of 'em, I should be happy to be of sarvice to 'ee.

LELIO : I'm the Count of Ancona, at your service.

PANTA. (*aside*) : Jiminy ! Not my boy. (*Aloud.*) Has your honour met a certain Lelio Bisagnosi in Naples ?

LELIO : I knew him very well, a great friend of mine, a most excellent fellow, full of wit, loved, adored by all. All the women run after him, and he is the idol of Naples. And, what is still more remarkable, he has an honest and a sincere heart and is incapable of uttering anything but the truth.

PANTA. (*aside*) : Heaven be praised ! (*Aloud.*) It's a fair comfort to hear it. I believe I could cry with happiness !

(Enter OTTAVIO from the Inn.)

OTTAVIO (to PANTALONE): Sir, congratulations to you on your good news.

PANTA.: What good news, Mäster Ottavio?

OTTAVIO: Your son's arrival.

PANTA.: Be he come? Where is he?

OTTAVIO: But why, doesn't he stand before you?

LELIO (aside): My father? Now, I've done it!

PANTA.: How now, Sir Count?

LELIO (laughing): Ha, ha, ha! Dear father, pray forgive this little jest of mine. I knew you at once, and was just watching you. Pray forgive me; I am at your feet.

PANTA.: Coom, my dear lad, coom. I've awaited 'ee these long years. Gie us a kiss, lad. But don't 'ee tell lies even in joke like!

LELIO: Believe me, this is the first untruth I've ever uttered since I reached man's estate.

PANTA.: Good, lad, see it's the läst. Ah, it is a gränd sight to see 'ee so fine a gem'man. Had 'ee a good journey? Why didn't 'ee coom straight hōme?

LELIO: I knew you were in the country. I would have gone out to find you at Mira if we had not met to-day.

PANTA.: Coom 'ee and tälk. I've grät news for 'ee. Mäster Ottavio, ye'll forgive us?

OTTAVIO: Your servant.

PANTA. (aside as he goes): Blessings on him! There's a fine lad, a fine lad! I'm fair mäzed wi' it all! (Gets into gondola.)

LELIO: Friend, this morning I treated the two sisters to the fair. They came masked to seek me, and I escorted them to the market. I confide in you; be silent.

(Follows PANTALONE into the gondola, which rows off.)

OTTAVIO: I am more than ever amazed at the frailty of these two girls. Here's a new light on them with a vengeance. They take advantage of their father's absence; but I should never have thought them capable of this.

DOCTOR (*re-entering from house*): Your servant, dear Don Ottavio.

OTTAVIO (*aside*): Poor old fellow! Much honour his daughters do him!

DOCTOR (*aside*): He's standing on his dignity. He's offended because I've refused him Beatrice up till now.

OTTAVIO (*aside*): At least, by refusing me Beatrice, he's saved me from a bad wife.

DOCTOR (*aside*): Now, I'll smooth things over. (*Aloud.*) Don Ottavio, I have news for you; I am marrying off Rosaura.

OTTAVIO: I am delighted to hear it. (*Aside.*) Accommodating bridegroom!

DOCTOR: That leaves Beatrice.

OTTAVIO: You should have no trouble in finding a husband for her.

DOCTOR: I know of more than one that aspires to be my son-in-law, because I've no other children than these two girls who'll be my sole heirs at my death. But as Don Ottavio has more than once shown a partiality for Beatrice, and as we're talking of marriages, I should prefer to give her to him rather than to any other.

OTTAVIO: My best thanks, but I am no longer in a position to accept your courtesy.

DOCTOR: Hah, what d'ye mean? D'ye want to revenge yourself for my previous refusal? It was not possible to marry her then; now it's different.

OTTAVIO (*disdainfully*): Give her to whom you will. I am not in a position to receive her.

DOCTOR (*angrily*): Why do you speak so disdainfully? Perhaps she's out of the gutter?

OTTAVIO: She's the daughter of an honest gentleman. But, degenerate from her father, she is no ornament to her surroundings.

DOCTOR: What do you mean, sir?

OTTAVIO: I'm not speaking without good reason. I should be silent, but the passion I entertained for Beatrice, and which at present I am unable to tear from my bosom, coupled with the friendship I bear you, obliges me to act as I do and enlighten you if you are blind.

DOCTOR : You deprive me of my senses ; what on earth has happened ?

OTTAVIO : Whatever happens, I'll not be silent. Your two daughters, last night, after enjoying a serenade, admitted a stranger into your house and finished the night in his company with supper and other delights.

DOCTOR : Impossible !

OTTAVIO : I am ready to maintain what I tell you.

DOCTOR : As you're a gentleman, you shall prove this ; if it turns out to be some fable of yours, I shall find means to make you pay.

OTTAVIO : The very man who arrived only yesterday from Naples and was admitted to their favours, shall be obliged to prove it to you.

DOCTOR : My daughters are incapable of such behaviour.

OTTAVIO : We shall see. If you take this rightly, I am a friend who warns you ; if you take it badly, I am one who in any case can prove his words.

(Exit.)

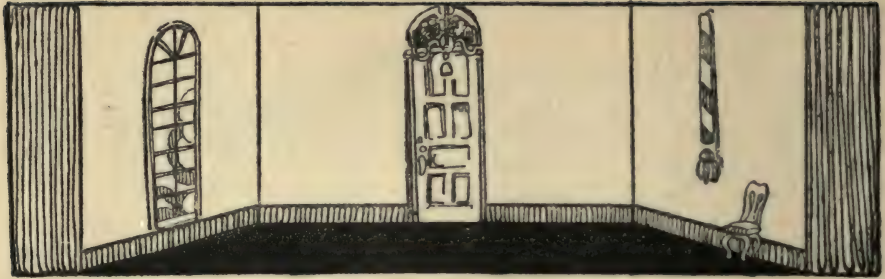
DOCTOR : Oh, unlucky man that I am ! My poor house ! My poor reputation ! This is an evil that neither Hippocrates nor Galen teaches us how to heal. But I shall find a moral medicine that will root it out. All depends on acting quickly, in preventing the evil spreading. *Principiis obsta sero medecina paratur.*

(Exit into house.)

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT I.





ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A room in the Doctor's house. Early afternoon of the same day.*

FLOR. : You may believe me, Doctor, on my honour, no one came into the house last night.

DOCTOR : I know for certain that a serenade was performed for my daughters.

FLOR. : True enough ; but they listened modestly to it from the balcony. A serenade doesn't harm an honest girl.

DOCTOR : But to admit people during the night ? To sup with a stranger ?

FLOR. : That's not true.

DOCTOR : What do you know about it ? You were in bed.

FLOR. : I lay awake all night.

DOCTOR : What did you do that for ?

FLOR. : It was too hot to sleep.

DOCTOR : Do you know Signor Ottavio ?

FLOR. : Yes, I know him.

DOCTOR : Well, he told me all this and says he can prove it.

FLOR. : Then he lies ! Ask him for his proofs and you'll soon find there's nothing in them.

DOCTOR : Well, if that were so, I should be sorry to have upset my daughters like this.

FLOR. : Poor girls ! You're treating them very harshly.



DOCTOR BALANZONI.



DOCTOR : Especially Rosaura, who's quite brokenhearted and won't be comforted.

FLOR. (*wiping his eyes*) : Poor thing ! My heart bleeds for her.

DOCTOR : What's the matter, my boy ? Are you crying ?

FLOR. : Of course not ; got some snuff in my eyes. (*Shows his snuff-box.*)

(*Enter COLOMBINA supporting ROSAURA, who is in a fainting condition.*)

COLOM. : Quick, quick, sir ! Poor Miss Rosaura has fainted and I can't bring her to. For pity's sake help her !

(*FLORINDO is in despair.*)

DOCTOR : Quick, spirits of melissa !

COLOM. : Feel how her heart palpitates ; surely she needs to be bled ?

DOCTOR : Florindo, examine her, feel her pulse, and if you think she wants bleeding, puncture a vein. I know you're first-rate at these things, and I'll go and get the melissa.

(*Exit.*)

COLOM. (*to FLORINDO*) : For Heaven's sake do something for her !

FLOR. : These are the fruits of her father's injustice. I'll do what I can.

COLOM. : Poor dear, she's not come to yet, and her sister doesn't come near her or give her a thought. I believe she wouldn't mind if she died. They can't abide each other.

FLOR. : Where are we ? I can see nothing.

COLOM. : What's the matter with you ? The room's bright enough. Look at poor Miss Rosaura.

FLOR. : Alas ! my strength fails me. Colombina, go and fetch what I need to bleed her.

COLOM. : At once. For heaven's sake, don't fail her.

(*Exit.*)

FLOR. : Alone at last—no one sees me—I may touch that beautiful hand. Yes, dearest, I'll feel your pulse. How beautiful she is, though unconscious! (*Feels her pulse.*) Alas! I'm dying! (*Falls fainting to the ground.*)

(*Enter COLOMBINA carrying a taper and other blood-letting apparatus.*)

COLOM. : Heavens! Here's the physician keeping the patient company!

(*Enter the DOCTOR.*)

DOCTOR : Here I am, here I am. Has she come to yet?

COLOM. : Look, Signor Florindo's fainted, too.

DOCTOR : The devil! What's he done that for? Here, quick! take this melissa and ply her with it—leave the lad to me.

COLOM. (*dabbing ROSAURA's face*) : She's coming round.

DOCTOR : So's Florindo. They seem to do things in concert.

ROSAURA : Oh, where am I?

DOCTOR : There, my daughter, take heart, it's nothing.

FLOR. (*aside*) : Good lord, what have I done? (*Gets up, sees the DOCTOR, and is ashamed.*)

DOCTOR : What was wrong with you, Florindo?

FLOR. (*stammering*) : Sir—I—I—don't know. Excuse me.

(*Exit in confusion.*)

DOCTOR : I believe that boy's mad.

COLOM. : Cheer up, madam, do; it's all right.

ROSAURA : Oh, father, for charity—

DOCTOR : My daughter, do calm yourself. I have been assured that what was said of you is pure invention. We shall emerge into the light of truth.

ROSAURA : But, father, whoever made you believe such monstrous lies?

DOCTOR : Why, Ottavio, to be sure.

ROSAURA : What grounds can he have for saying such dreadful things?

DOCTOR : Heaven alone knows; but he said he'd prove them.

ROSAURA : Let him prove them, if he can. Father, it is a

question of your honour and of my honour; don't let this matter drop.

DOCTOR : I'll see him at once about it.

COLOM. : Wait a bit, I'll go and fetch him here to the house, and by Jiminy, we'll make him take it back.

DOCTOR : Do, and if you find him, say I want to speak to him.

COLOM. : I'll bring him here in spite of himself.

(Exit.)

ROSAURA : You've caused me great pain.

DOCTOR : Come, come, we'll cure it with a new happiness. Know, my child, that I have promised your hand in marriage.

ROSAURA : To whom ?

DOCTOR : To the son of Signor Pantalone.

ROSAURA : For Heaven's sake, sir, if you love me, don't insist on this marriage !

DOCTOR : Tell me why, and, perhaps, we'll see about it.

ROSAURA : A respectful and obedient daughter has no secrets from her father. Know, sir, that a foreign gentleman of great blood and exalted position wishes to marry me.

DOCTOR (*angrily*) : So, then there *is* a foreigner in the case ? and, if *that's* true, the tale of the serenade is true, and the supper party's true, too.

ROSAURA : It is true that a great foreigner loves me and caused a serenade to be performed in my honour, but I have only spoken once with him, and that from the balcony, and may Heaven strike me dead if he has ever set foot inside the house !

DOCTOR : What ! a great gentleman want to marry you ?

ROSAURA : At least he makes me hope so.

DOCTOR : Take care that he is not some impostor !

ROSAURA : He is to present himself to you to-day. *You* shall keep your eyes open for me.

DOCTOR : Listen to me : if this good fortune is really destined for you, I shan't be mad enough to stand in your way. I am somewhat engaged to Pantalone, but only verbally ; and I shan't have any trouble in finding some pretext to free myself.

ROSAURA : It will be enough to say that I won't marry him.

DOCTOR : It would certainly *not* be enough, for *I* am master here ! What is this gentleman's name ?

ROSAURA : The Marquess Asdrubale of Castel d'Oro.

DOCTOR : Gracious, my goodness ! A Marquess ?

(*Enter BEATRICE unnoticed behind them ; she listens.*)

ROSAURA : He has loved me for a year, but only declared himself yesterday.

DOCTOR : He's quite serious ?

ROSAURA : Believe me, he adores me.

DOCTOR : You're sure he wants to marry you ?

ROSAURA : He has given me his word.

DOCTOR : If that's the way things stand, I'll do my best to help you.

BEAT. (*coming forward*) : Father, don't be so easily taken in by what my sister says. It's not true that Don Asdrubale has declared himself in her favour. He loves one of us, and without too much flattering myself, I have every reason to believe 'tis me he prefers.

DOCTOR (*to ROSAURA*) : And now what's at the bottom of all this ?

ROSAURA (*to BEAT.*) : Where do your hopes spring from ?

BEAT. : From the same place that yours do.

ROSAURA : Father, I am not speaking without good grounds.

BEAT. : Believe me, I know what I'm talking about.

DOCTOR : Here's a fine tangle ! Listen to what I'm going to say to you, and let's have as few words as possible. You'll stop at home, both of you, and not go out without my permission. If my Lord Marquess comes to talk to me, I shall soon see what the truth is and which of you is the favoured one. But if it's all a fairy tale, as I believe, I shall have cause to say without wronging one or t'other of you, that you're both daft !

(*Exit angrily.*)

BEAT. : Well, madam sister, and what grounds have you for thinking the Marquess your declared suitor ?

ROSAURA : Infallible grounds, my dear. But I'm not obliged to tell *you* everything.

BEAT. : Oh, *I* know ; you've been out masked and taken some pains to draw the water to your mill. But I swear I'll take the wind out of your sails.

ROSAURA : What possible pretensions can you have ? Does he seem to prefer you ? Does he seem to want you ?

BEAT. : He has said to me what he has said to you, and I cannot imagine by what right you pretend him yours.

ROSAURA : Well, we shall see.

BEAT. : If I thought you'd played me some underhand trick, you'd pay for it !

ROSAURA : It seems to me you should show some decency. After all, I'm the elder.

BEAT. : Oh, pray, let me kiss the superior lady's hand.

ROSAURA : Oh, well, I've always said so : we never do get on together.

BEAT. : If it were not for you, I should have been married three years ago. Fifty suitors wanted me, but our father never wished to wrong his eldest born.

ROSAURA : Oh, yes, we know *your* wonderful suitors ! Amongst others, the ingenious Signor Ottavio, who, perhaps to revenge himself on your disdain, has invented all these fine tales he has been telling our father.

BEAT. : Ottavio invented them ?

ROSAURA : Father has just told me so.

BEAT. : The wretch ! If only I could lay my hands on him !

ROSAURA : He deserves to be flogged !

(*Enter COLOMBINA, ushering in OTTAVIO.*)

COLOM. : My ladies, here is Signor Ottavio, who wishes to see you.

OTTAVIO : Behold me, covered with blushes and confusion——

ROSAURA (*interrupting him*) : Deceiver !

BEAT. : Liar !

OTTAVIO : Ladies, I'm neither one nor t'other.

ROSAURA : Who told my father that we had been serenaded ?

OTTAVIO : I did, but——

BEAT. (*interrupting him*) : Who told him we'd received a stranger here in the house during the night ?

OTTAVIO : I, but——

ROSAURA (*interrupting*) : Deceiver !

BEAT. : Liar !

OTTAVIO : But, Lelio Bisognosi——

ROSAURA (*interrupting*) : Did you say we were on the balcony ?

OTTAVIO : Yes, Madam, but listen——

BEAT. (*interrupting*) : Did you say we'd been entertained by the stranger ?

OTTAVIO : I said so, because he himself——

BEAT. (*interrupting*) : Deceiver !

(*Exit.*)

ROSAURA : Liar !

(*Exit.*)

OTTAVIO : But, if they won't let me speak ? Colombina, I place my honour in your keeping. Go to your mistresses, prevail upon them to listen to me, and I will satisfy them, I promise you.

COLOM. : But what can you say to clear yourself ?

OTTAVIO : I can say much, and that it is the truth you shall judge for yourself.

COLOM. : Well, let's hear the case. You told the master that the foreign gentleman entered the house during the night.

OTTAVIO : But if——

COLOM. (*interrupting*) : You said they supped together.

OTTAVIO : Yes, but of all this——

COLOM. (*interrupting*) : Did you say it, or did you not ?

OTTAVIO : I said it.

COLOM. : Then you're a deceiver and a liar !

(*Exit.*)

OTTAVIO : Even the chambermaid flouts me ! How shall I

adjust matters with Beatrice ? And what is even more important, however shall I settle things with her father ? Lord, here he comes !

(*Enter Doctor.*)

DOCTOR : What's the matter, Signor Ottavio ? What are you doing in my house ?

OTTAVIO : Sir, I am at your feet.

DOCTOR : So what you told me was false ?

OTTAVIO : I did not invent what I told you, but I allowed myself to be too easily gulled, and too quickly reported to you what a liar asserted to be the truth.

DOCTOR : Who's that ?

OTTAVIO : Lelio Bisognosi.

DOCTOR : Signor Pantalone's son ?

OTTAVIO : Exactly.

DOCTOR : He's arrived in Venice ?

OTTAVIO : He arrived yesterday to my misfortune.

DOCTOR : Where ? At his father's house ?

OTTAVIO : I think not. He's a gay spark and loves his liberty.

DOCTOR : But what made the wretch say all this ?

OTTAVIO : He said it with such fervour that I was forced to believe him ; and if Florindo, whom I know to be sincere and honourable, had not enlightened me, perhaps I, even yet, might not be completely disillusioned.

DOCTOR : I wonder how, having barely arrived, he found time to invent such tarradiddles ? Does he know that Rosaura and Beatrice are my daughters ?

OTTAVIO : I think so. He knows them to be the daughters of a doctor.

DOCTOR : Oh, the villain ! He treats them thus, does he ? He shan't have Rosaura.

OTTAVIO : Doctor, I beg your pardon.

DOCTOR : Granted.

OTTAVIO : Don't deprive me of your favour.

DOCTOR : I'll be your friend.

OTTAVIO : Remember you offered me Beatrice.

DOCTOR : I remember you refused her.

OTTAVIO : Don't deprive me of her, I beg you.

DOCTOR : We'll talk of it.

OTTAVIO : Say yes, I implore you !

DOCTOR : I'll bear it in mind.

OTTAVIO : I ask for the daughter, never mind the dowry.

DOCTOR : Well, well, we'll see.

(*Exit.*)

OTTAVIO : I don't mind losing the dowry if I win Beatrice. But it's not going to be easy ; women are more constant in hate than in love.

CURTAIN.

END OF SCENE I.

SCENE II. *A room in PANTALONE'S house.*

Early afternoon of the same day.

LELIO : Arlecchino, I'm really in love.

ARLE. : By your leave, zur, I don't believe a word o't.

LELIO : You can believe it. It is so.

ARLE. : Dön't believe it, faith of a gentleman.

LELIO : Well, it's the truth this time.

ARLE. : Mebbe 'tis trewth, but I doant believe it.

LELIO : Why not, if it's the truth ?

ARLE. : 'Cos I doant believe the trewth from a liar.

LELIO : You might recognize the fact that I'm in love from my continual sighs.

ARLE. : Ay, as if ye couldn't sigh and weep too when ye're so pleased ! Mrs. Cleonice knows that well enough, to her cost, poor thing.



ARLECCHINO.

LELIO : She was a little too easy game.

ARLE. : Ay, but ye promised her marriage, änd the poor wumman believed ye.

LELIO : I have been deceived by more than ten women ; am I not to be allowed to fool one ?

ARLE. : Best präy to Heaven she doant find out you're in Venice änd follow you.

LELIO : She'd never dare !

ARLE. : Doant 'e be too sartin ; wimmin in love häve done more nor that.

LELIO : Oh, come, stop this odious talk. I've forgotten Cleonice now and love Rosaura. I love her absorbingly, with a most overwhelming passion.

ARLE. : Ay, 'tis plain enough by ye're fine presents to her. Jiminy, ten zecchins fur läce !

LELIO (*laughing*) : Ah, yes, how did that bit of business strike you ?

ARLE. : Ay, ye be witty invention itself. But, zur, here we be ät ye're fäther's house änd no vittels zo far.

LELIO : Oh, don't be such a glutton.

ARLE. : Whät's he like, yer fäther ? Haven't seen 'un yet.

LELIO : Oh, fine old fellow. Here he comes.

(*Enter PANTALONE.*)

ARLE. : Wäuns, what a fine beard ! (*Aside.*)

PANTA. : Well, boy, I wäs a-lookin' for you.

LELIO : Here I am at your service.

ARLE. (*trying to drop his dialect*) : Sir Don Pantalone, being —ah—as one might put it—the sarvant—of your masculine seed, I gives myself the vast honour—of being—that is to say—to protest myself also your honour's sarvant ! You understand me, no need of mentioning it !

PANTA. (*to LELIO*) : Delightful fellow ! Who is he ?

LELIO : Oh, a servant of mine, a fool, but faithful.

PANTA. : Fine ! He'll be rare sport.

ARLE. : Ay, I'll pläy the clown for 'ee.

PANTA. : Ay, do.

ARLE. : But take wärning, mäster, plenty to eat; clowns eat a mort o' food.

PANTA. : Right! ye shan't go empty.

ARLE. : Let's zee if ye're the gentleman.

PANTA. : I ständs by whät I sez.

ARLE. : Let's zee: I could do wi' summat now.

PANTA. : Go to the kitchen änd get some food.

ARLE. : Yes, ye're the gentleman right enough. I'll go find the cook. (*To LELIO.*) A word in yer ear, mäster.

LELIO. : What is it?

ARLE. (*aside to LELIO*) : I doant believe he's your fäther.

LELIO (*aside to ARLE.*) : Why?

ARLE. (*aside to LELIO*) : 'Cos he speäks trewth änd ye're a liar!

(*Exit.*)

LELIO (*aside*) : He's really getting above himself.

PANTA. : Queer fellow thät sarvent o' yourn. And now for a word wi' ye, my läd.

LELIO. : I'm all attention.

PANTA. : Ye know thät I shall leave ye my zole heir, änd now my poor brother's gone I shall leave 'ee more than 'ee bargained for. So ye're ripe fer a fäm'ley, and to cut things short, I wänt to zee 'ee married.

LELIO. : I'd already thought of this. I've something in view and in good time we'll talk of it.

PANTA. : A younker only thinks o' satisfyin' hissself wi' flummery o' looks än' whät nöt, and ärter four däys he's fair sick of it. This be a fäther's job; they mean well by the young folk, än' doan't let their feelin's ride 'em, zo all goes fair änd zoftly in the end.

LELIO. : Of course, I should not think of acting without you. I shall always be dependent on your advice and authority.

PANTA. : If ye feel like thät, ye might as well know ye're as good as married already. I settled it all this morning.

LELIO. : What! without me?

PANTA. : Ye couldn't do better; a good housewife, good dowry,

her fäther a professional man o' Bologna, but livin' here, a fine wench änd a witty. What more d'ye wänt? I gived my word änd the business is done.

LELIO: You'll forgive me, sir, but though it's true that the fathers think of their sons' welfare, the sons have got to live with the wives they've chosen, and it's only right they should be satisfied.

PANTA: Ye weren't saying thät just now, my boy. Arter all, I'm your fäther, änd if ye're foreign breeding ha'n't taught ye to respect me, 'tain't too läte to learn yet.

LELIO: But am I not even to see her first?

PANTA: Ye'll zee her when ye zign the contract an' not before; 'tis the old wäy o' doing things. I've done well by ye, I'm ye're fäther änd there's an end on't.

LELIO (*aside*): It's about time for a witty invention.

PANTA: Whät's thät ye say?

LELIO: Ah, father, your authority has placed me in a great dilemma, and I can no longer keep my secret hidden from you.

PANTA: Well, whät's it now?

LELIO (*kneeling*): I throw myself at your feet! I know that I have erred but I was forced to it.

PANTA: Well, my boy, whät häve ye done?

LELIO: I tell you with tears in my eyes.

PANTA: Out wi' it.

LELIO: I have a wife in Naples.

PANTA: And ye tell me this now? Ye never wrote a word? Did my poor brother know?

LELIO: He did not know.

PANTA: Get 'ee up, boy. Ye doant deserve a fäther, änd I'm fair minded to turn 'ee out. But dammit, ye're my own zon, an' there's no cure for whät's done. If she be a decent gal änd 'ull write to me, mayhap—*mayhap* I'll put up wi' it. But if 'ee've married but a strumpet!

LELIO: Father, what do you mean? I've married a most honest lady.

PANTA: Whät's her stätion?

LELIO: A knight's daughter.

PANTA. : Wheer be she from ?

LELIO : Naples.

PANTA. : Dowry ?

LELIO : Most rich.

PANTA. : An' ye keep this zort o' marriage from me ? Were 'ee afräid I'd säy "No" to it ? I've zome zense. 'Ee did right to märry her, but why keep it hid ? P'r'aps 'ee did it wi'out her fäther's knowledge ?

LELIO : He had full knowledge of it.

PANTA. : Then why, in the näme o' goodness, keep it hid from me änd my brother ?

LELIO : Because I married her on both feet, as it were.

PANTA. : What d'ye meän, "on both feet" ?

LELIO : I was surprised by her father in the lady's chamber.

PANTA. : Whät did 'ee go theer for ?

LELIO : Amorous folly, fruits of my youth.

PANTA. : Wretch ! Now ye're spliced thät's all over. Whät's her näme.

LELIO : Briseide.

PANTA. : An' her fäther's ?

LELIO : Don Policarpe.

PANTA. : Zurnäme ?

LELIO : D'Albacava.

PANTA. : Young ?

LELIO : Of my age.

PANTA. : How did 'ee get to know her ?

LELIO : Their villa joined ours.

PANTA. : How did 'ee get in ?

LELIO : By the help of a friendly chambermaid.

PANTA. : An' ye found the ledy in her room ?

LELIO : Yes, all alone.

PANTA. : Night or day ?

LELIO : Betwixt light and dark.

PANTA. : An' ye were fule enough to be found an' risk being killed ?

LELIO : I hid in a cupboard.

PANTA. : Ay ? An' how did they find 'ee then ?

LELIO : My repeater struck the hour and her father became suspicious.

PANTA : The devil ! Whät did he zäy ?

LELIO : He asked his daughter whose repeater it was.

PANTA : An' the läss ?

LELIO : Said immediately that her cousin had given it to her.

PANTA : An' who might *that* be ?

LELIO : The Duchess Matilda, daughter of Prince Astolfo, sister of Count Argante, master of His Majesty's hunt.

PANTA : This wench of yourn häs a fläshy zet o' relations.

LELIO : She comes of the flower of nobility.

PANTA : Ay, änd about the watch ? Did the fäther give over ?

LELIO : He wanted to see it.

PANTA : Wauns ! whät happened then ?

LELIO : Briseide opened the cupboard door a crack and asked me under her breath for the watch.

PANTA : Fine ! whät else could she do ?

LELIO : In taking it out of my pocket the chain caught in the trigger of a pistol I held ready cocked, and it exploded.

PANTA : Poor läd, did it härm 'ee ?

LELIO : Oh, a mere nothing.

PANTA : What did 'ee say ? Whät häppened next ?

LELIO : The deuce of a row. My father-in-law called the servants.

PANTA : They found 'ee——

LELIO : Of course.

PANTA : I fair trembles. What did 'ee do then ?

LELIO : I put my hand on my sword and they all fled.

PANTA : They might ha' settled 'ee.

LELIO : I have a sword that fears not a hundred.

PANTA : In its sheath, läd, in its sheath. An' so 'ee got away ?

LELIO : I did not want to desert my charmer.

PANTA : What zaid the läss ?

LELIO (*tenderly*) : She dissolved in tears at my feet.

PANTA : 'Tis a fair romance.

LELIO : It's true, nevertheless.

PANTA : What was the end on't ?

LELIO : My father-in-law ran for a justice of the peace, who sent a captain with a company of soldiers. They forced me to marry her, and for a punishment gave me a dowry of twenty thousand crowns.

PANTA. (*aside*) : 'Tis the first time I heard the like !

LELIO (*aside*) : I defy the first gazetteer of Europe to invent a fact more circumstantially.

PANTA. : Boy, ye staked a zäd risk, thänk yer stärs ye weathered it an' cäme well out on't, but 'tis a warning an' take heed to lärn by it. Pistols, forsooth—here we doant hold wi' em.

LELIO : I have never carried firearms again from that day to this.

PANTA. : Whoy didn't ye tell ye're uncle o' yer marriage ?

LELIO : He was dangerously ill when all this happened.

PANTA. : Whoy didn't ye write me a letter ?

LELIO : I wanted to tell you myself.

PANTA. : Whoy didn't ye bring the gal wi' 'ee ?

LELIO : She's six months gone with child.

PANTA. : Six months ? A fair nothing. Fine job you've made of it, not telling me. Your fäther-in-law will think me a fine fäther not to häve written him a word about äll this. Faith, but I'll cure it now. The post fur Näples goes to-night. I'll write 'un an' tell 'un to keep his eye on the brät. I misremember Don Policarpe's zurnäme. Tell me again, dear boy.

LELIO (*aside*) : I've forgotten it too ! (*Aloud.*) Don Policarpe dell' Artichoke.

PANTA. : Artichoke ? Zurely not ! Now I remember, 'ee zaid d'Albacava.

LELIO : Dell' Artichoke is his surname ; d'Albacava his estate. He is called indifferently by one or t'other.

PANTA. : I zee. I'll go write. I'll tell 'un to zend her along as zoon as she's fit for't. I can't abide the thought o' waiting to zee her an' kiss the baby. He, he ! Pantalone a gran'fäther !

(*Exit.*)

LELIO : It's taken some trouble to get rid of that Bolognese. If I am to be bound in matrimonial chains Rosaura shall do it.

After all, at least she's a doctor's daughter, and my father cannot despise her. After I've married her, the Neapolitan shall turn Venetian. My father wants grandchildren? I'll oblige him!

CURTAIN.

END OF SCENE II.

SCENE III. *The Street.*

Early afternoon.

FLOR.: Brighella, I'm desperate.

BRIG.: For whoy?

FLOR.: I'm told that Doctor Balonzoni intends marrying Rosaura to a Neapolitan Marquis.

BRIG.: Who told 'ee that?

FLOR.: Her sister, Beatrice.

BRIG.: Then ye've little time to lose—Out wi' it, man.

FLOR.: Yes, Brighella, I am at last resolved to declare myself.

BRIG.: Stars and garters! Maybe I'll zee ye happy for once.

FLOR.: I have composed a poem and by its aid I shall stand revealed.

BRIG.: She doan't want poems—best speak in plain prose.

FLOR.: The poem will tell all.

BRIG.: If it's plain speaking enough, happen 'twill serve—let's hear 'un.

FLOR.: Here it is—Isn't the writing beautiful?

BRIG.: 'Tis none o' yourn.

FLOR.: No, I had it copied.

BRIG.: For whoy?

FLOR.: So that my handwriting should not be recognized, of course.

BRIG.: Bean't she to know 'tis yourn?

FLOR. : Listen ! Doesn't it speak plainer than I ? (*Reads.*)

“ Heart's idol, O my most adorèd fate,
 For thee I suffer silently and long,
 Fearing the gods have picked another mate
 To pair with thee and cause th' eternal wrong.
 For thee my eyes are rivers, and my heart
 Is sinking in a lake of brinish tears—
 Ah, me ! the thought that ever we should part
 Ages my youth and strikes me down in years—
 I am no knight, no title can I claim,
 Gold have I none and riches little store,
 A middle station and a modest name,
 And honest toil and there is nothing more.
 Lombard am I and bred to other skies,
 Oft in thy sight I lurk and at thy hand—
 Silence I've nourisht, now I raise my eyes,
 For thee an exile in a foreign land.
 Rosaura, goddess, know at length my zeal—
 Soon, soon, shall I my name and heart reveal.”

There ! what do you think of that ?

BRIG. : 'Tis fine, surely, but it don't explain nothin'.

FLOR. : What do you mean, it explains nothing ? Does it not speak plainly ? Why, it paints my portrait exactly and where it says “ Lombard am I,” doesn't that clearly prove I'm Bolognese ?

BRIG. : Lombardy might meän a mort o' towns : Milan, Bergamo, Bressa, Verona, Mantua, Modena—how be she to guess ye mean Bologna ?

FLOR. : Well, take this line : “ Oft in thy sight I lurk and at thy hand,” doesn't that clearly indicate me ?

BRIG. : On'y might be others.

FLOR. : Oh, really, you're too sophisticated ; the poem's plain enough and she'll understand.

BRIG. : If ye giv' it her yourself she might guess.

FLOR. : I don't want to give it to her.

BRIG. : Then what be ye agoin' to do ?

FLOR. : I thought of throwing it on to the balcony. She'll find it, read it, and know all.

BRIG. : Happen 'tis found by another ?

FLOR. : Whoever finds it will give it to Rosaura to read.

BRIG. : 'Twould be better——

FLOR. : Oh ! be quiet ! I shall do it this way. (*Throws poem on to balcony.*)

BRIG. : Bravo ! Ye've better hands nor tongue.

FLOR. : I think someone's coming out on to the balcony.

BRIG. : Bide awhile and watch.

FLOR. : Come away ! Come away ! (*Exit.*)

BRIG. : Håve it yer own way. (*Exit following FLOR.*)

(*Enter COLOMBINA on to balcony.*)

COLOM. : Something fell on to the balcony. What was it, I wonder ? Here's a bit of paper. Can it be a letter ? (*Opens the paper.*) What a nuisance I read so badly ! P—O—E—M—poem. (*Calls through window.*) Madame, a poem has been thrown on to the balcony.

(*Enter ROSAURA through window.*)

ROSAURA : A poem ? Who threw it ?

COLOM. : I don't know, I found it by accident.

ROSAURA : Give it to me, I *must* read it.

COLOM. : Read it, and then you can tell me all about it, and I'll go on with my ironing whilst my iron's hot.

(*Exit into house.*)

ROSAURA : Now, what is it all about ? (*Reads to herself.*)

(*Enter LELIO in street below.*)

LELIO : Ah, there's Rosaura ; she's reading something rather attentively. I wonder what it can be ?

ROSAURA (*to herself*) : I must say this poem rather surprises me.

LELIO : Permit me the privilege, O fairest, of saluting you.

ROSAURA : Oh, I beg your pardon, my lord, I did not see you.

LELIO : And what are you reading ? May I participate ?

ROSAURA : It's a poem that Colombina has just discovered on the balcony, and I find that it's addressed to me.

LELIO : And do you know who wrote it ?

ROSAURA : There's no name to it.

LELIO : Don't you recognize the handwriting ?

ROSAURA : No.

LELIO : Can't you guess who wrote it ?

ROSAURA : I've been trying to, and I can't.

LELIO : So it's very beautiful ?

ROSAURA : Well, it seems so to me.

LELIO : Love poem ?

ROSAURA : It's certainly about love and I can't imagine greater tenderness.

LELIO : And you still search the author ?

ROSAURA : Yes, I can't make him out.

LELIO : 'Tis an offspring of my muse.

ROSAURA : You wrote this poem !

LELIO : Yes, my dear, none other.

ROSAURA : You amaze me !

LELIO : Perhaps you do not consider me capable of writing a poem ?

ROSAURA : Oh, yes, but I wasn't quite expecting this !

LELIO : Do not the verses speak of a heart that adores you ?

ROSAURA : Well, listen to the first lines and tell me if they are yours. (*Reads.*)

“ Heart's idol, O my most adorèd fate
For thee I suffer silently and long.”

LELIO : Of course, it's mine—

“ Heart's idol, O my most adorèd fate,
For thee I suffer silently and long.”

You see, I know it by heart.

ROSAURA : But why "silently" when you spoke to me yesterday ?

LELIO : I didn't explain myself to the thousandth part. Besides I've been silent for a whole year.

ROSAURA : Well, then, this (*reads*) :

"Fearing the gods have picked another mate
To pair with thee and cause th' eternal wrong,
For thee my eyes are rivers and my heart
Is sinking in a lake of brinish tears.
Ah me ! the thought that we should ever part
Ages my youth and strikes me down in years."

But who is courting me ? Who wants me ?

LELIO : Oh, that's only the usual lover's jealousy. I've not spoken to your father. You are not yet mine, so I am always in doubt, and doubting, weep.

ROSAURA : My lord, be so good as to explain these four exquisite lines. (*Reads.*) :

"I am no knight, no title can I claim
Gold have I none and riches little store.
A middle station and a modest name
And honest toil and there is nothing more."

LELIO (*aside*) : Lud ! Here's a pretty fix !

ROSAURA : Is this the offspring of your muse, or is it not ?

LELIO : Yes, madam, alas ! Yes. The sincere and loyal affection with which you have inspired me no longer permits me to continue a fable which one day, perhaps, would cause you annoyance and put me to the blush. True, I am neither a knight nor do I carry a title. In a fantastic mood I feigned both on presenting myself to two sisters by whom I did not wish to be known. I would not adventure blindfold ; I wished first to ascertain if I might flatter myself that in some degree you inclined to me. Then, seeing you pliant to my honest desires, and I hope to some degree partial, I resolved to tell you the truth. But, lacking courage to tell you myself, I hit upon the expedient of telling you in a

poem. I am not rich, but of medium fortune ; in Naples I follow the noble calling of merchant, so it's quite true that "honest toil there is and nothing more."

ROSAURA : I must say your confession rather surprises me. I ought really to order you from my presence as a deceiver, but I find myself unable to do this. A solid merchant is a not unworthy match. However, the rest of the poem causes me still livelier curiosity.

LELIO (*aside*) : The devil ! What worse can follow ?

ROSAURA (*reads*) : "Lombard am I and bred to other skies"
—How does that apply to you, a Neapolitan ?

LELIO : Naples is a part of Lombardy.

ROSAURA : Well, I never heard that before.

LELIO : Excuse me, read your history. You will find that the Longobards occupied all Italy, and wherever they were in occupation is now called in the language of poetry "Lombardy." (*Aside.*)
With a woman I can make shift to pass for an historian.

ROSAURA : Well, it may be as you say ; but to proceed. (*Reads.*)
"Oft in thy sight I lurk and at your hand." I never saw you till last night ! How can you say "Oft in thy sight" ?

LELIO : Did I use the present tense ?

ROSAURA : Yes.

LELIO : A slip of the pen—I meant the future. "Oft in thy sight *I'll* lurk."

ROSAURA (*reading*) : "Silence I've nourisht, now I raise my eyes."

LELIO : I've kept silent a year and can do so no longer.

ROSAURA : There remain the last three lines.

LELIO (*aside*) : If I get out of this I am a prodigy.

ROSAURA (*reads*) : "For thee an exile in a foreign land."

LELIO : If it were not for you I should be at this moment either in London or in Portugal ; my business requires it, but my passion for you keeps me in Venice.

ROSAURA (*reads*) : "Rosaura, goddess, know at length my zeal."

LELIO : Well, that line doesn't need an explanation.

ROSAURA (*dryly*) : The last one will. (*Reads.*) "Soon, soon shall I my name and heart reveal."

LELIO : This is the day, and this the explanation. Know then, I am not Asdrubale di Castel d'Oro, but Ruggiero Pandolfi.

ROSAURA : Well, I could never have mastered the poem without the commentary.

LELIO : Poets invariably speak in symbols.

ROSAURA : So you invented your name, too ?

LELIO : Last night I was in the vein of invention.

ROSAURA : What's your vein to-day ?

LELIO : That of the sincerest truth.

ROSAURA : Then I may believe your love is not altogether feigned ?

LELIO : I am consumed with passion for you, and will never find peace until I have achieved your hand.

ROSAURA : I do not wish to be subjected to new deceptions. Speak to my father, explain yourself to him, and if he consents I'll not refuse you. Though you've fooled me, I cannot disdain you.

LELIO : Where shall I find your father ?

ROSAURA : Here he comes.

DOCTOR (*speaking off in the house*) : Is that he ?

ROSAURA : Yes, but—

DOCTOR (*appearing at the window, low to ROSAURA*) : Go in.

ROSAURA : But, listen—

DOCTOR : Do as you're told, don't put me out.

ROSAURA : I suppose I must obey.

(*The DOCTOR draws her in through window—both disappear.*)

LELIO (*aside*) : Really, I did that extremely well. Gil Blas himself has not more complete adventures.

(*Re-enter DOCTOR through the street door.*)

DOCTOR (*aside*) : You can see from his manner that he's a great nobleman, but he seems to me a bit touched.

LELIO (*aside*) : Now for the father. (*Aloud.*) Doctor, your humble devoted servant.

DOCTOR : Sir, your most devoted.

LELIO : Have you not, sir, the honour of being the father of Madame Rosaura ?

DOCTOR : At your service.

LELIO : I am rejoiced to hear it, and I am entirely at your command.

DOCTOR : Sir, you are too good.

LELIO : Sir, I am a man that in all things employs the most direct route ; therefore, without any further beating about the bush, permit me to say that I have fallen a victim to your daughter's charms, and wish to marry her.

DOCTOR : Sir, I like your laconic way of doing things. My answer is that you do me and my house a vast honour which is far above our merits. I will willingly bestow her upon you when you have had the condescension and goodness to establish your identity.

LELIO : When you have given me Rosaura I will immediately reveal myself.

DOCTOR : Are you not the Marquess Asdrubale ?

(Enter OTTAVIO.)

OTTAVIO (to LELIO) : You're the man I'm looking for. You'll have to account to me for the wicked lies you have been spreading about the doctor's daughters. If you're a gentleman draw your sword.

DOCTOR : What ? My Lord Marquess ?

OTTAVIO : Marquess be damned ! This is Lelio, Signor Pantalone's son.

DOCTOR : The devil ! What's all this ?

LELIO (to OTTAVIO) : Whoever I am, I have spirit enough to cut your comb. (*Draws his sword.*)

OTTAVIO (*drawing*) : Come on then, if you're man enough.

DOCTOR (*rushing between them*) : Put up, Ottavio, I'll not have it. Why fight with this monstrous liar ? Come away with me.

OTTAVIO : : Let me go, I beg of you.

DOCTOR : I refuse, I won't have it ! If you love my daughter come with me.

OTTAVIO : I must obey you. (*To LELIO.*) We'll meet again.

LELIO : I'm ready for you at any time.

DOCTOR : Bravo, my Lord Marquess! Sir Neapolitan! Knight! Nobleman! Blackguard! Impostor! Liar!

(*Goes into his house with OTTAVIO.*)

LELIO : Damn Ottavio! Why does he persecute me like this? I swear to Heaven I'll make him pay for it. This sword shall do it. (*Flourishes his sword.*)

(*Enter ARLECCHINO.*)

ARLE : Whät be ye a-doin' wi' thät sword, mäster?

LELIO : Ottavio challenged me.

ARLE : An' ye fought 'un?

LELIO : For three-quarters of an hour.

ARLE : Ay? An' how färed ye?

LELIO : With a single lunge I transfixed my enemy.

ARLE : He mun be dead?

LELIO : Naturally.

ARLE : Wheer's the body?

LELIO : They've taken it away.

ARLE : Brävo, mäster, ye be a clever män, ye be. 'Tis the greatest thing ye've ever done.

(*Re-enter OTTAVIO.*)

OTTAVIO : I've not done with you yet. To-morrow I'll await you on the Guidecca. If you're a man of honour you'll fight me there.

(*ARLECCHINO goes through pantomime of admiration on seeing OTTAVIO.*)

LELIO : I'll be there.

OTTAVIO : I'll teach you to be less of a liar.

(*Exit.*)

ARLE. (*laughing*): Mäster, the dead walk.

LELIO: Rage must have blinded me. I've killed another in his place.

ARLE.: May be you killed 'un wi' a witty invention like!

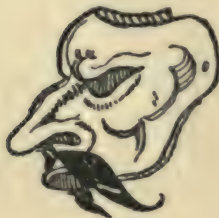
(*Coughs—exit.*)

LELIO: That poem put me in a pretty fix. What could have been worse? "I am no knight, no title can I claim," and then, "Lombard am I and bred to other skies." That of rival mine, whoever he is, caught me very prettily, but, thank Heaven, I have my wits about me. When I make my will I shall have these words engraved on my monument:

"Here Lelio lies of life bereft,
His lies alone are all that's left,
Invention's child, Romance's heir,
The lawyer's guide, and the despair
Of novelist and pamphleteer,
Pray give the tribute of a tear;
And though in tomb you see him lie
Believe it not, oh passer by,
Though you should see him cased in lead
You'd risk a lot to bet he's dead.

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT II.







ROSAURA.



ACT III.

SCENE I. *The Street.*

Late afternoon of same day.

(Enter FLORINDO from the Doctor's house ; to him BRIGHELLA.)

BRIG. : I wäs a-lookin' for you, sir.

FLOR. : Were you ? What is it ?

BRIG. : Ye've spoken to Mrs. Rosaura ?

FLOR. : Not yet. I have not seen her since the poem.

BRIG. : I'm afeared ye're too läte then.

FLOR. : Oh, Lud ! Why ?

BRIG. : 'Cos there's a rogue that's a-goin' to rob the nest.

FLOR. : Who is it ? The Marquess of Castel d'Oro ?

BRIG. : That's him. I've met his sarvant, who cooms from my parts ; he's simple-like and blown the whole thing. He's told the lady that the zurrinade was his'n, and ye're poem too, and he's told a peck o' lies each one worsen' t'other ; ye zow—he reaps ; ye zigh—he laughs ; ye keep mum—and he speaks ; he'll get what he wants and ye'll be left lickin' dry chops.

FLOR. : Oh, Brighella, this is terrible !

BRIG. : Ye mun settle ye're mind ; either speak at once or lose the lass.

FLOR. : I wish I could speak, but I lack the courage.

BRIG. : Speak to her fäther then.

FLOR. : He frightens me.

BRIG. : Get some 'un to do it for 'ee, then.

FLOR. : Whom can I trust ?

BRIG. : I'd do it for 'ee, but it be'ant the work for a sarvant in livery.

FLOR. : Advise me ; what am I to do ?

BRIG. : Let's go in and put our heads together.

FLOR. : Yes, don't let's waste any time. My dear fellow, I'm so grateful to you. If ever I succeed in marrying Rosaura I shall owe all my bliss to your affection.

(Both go into house.)

(Enter PANTALONE, carrying a letter.)

PANTA. : I be a-goin' to post this myself ; I don't want no sarvant to forget it. I should 'a written afore now. He's a daft fellow, that zon o' mine : him a married man goin' about a-foolin' wi' the doctor's gals ! All cooms o' a furrin' eddication ; now, if I'd had the bringin' of him up it wouldn't have been. Never mind, for all he's a married man, I'll coom up wi' un ! Worst of it all is the doctor be right, an' I'll have the squarin' up of 'un. Sly rogue—Marquess of Castel d'Oro, zurrinades and zuppers ! Ay, but he has me to reckon with. I'll go talk to his lordship when this letter's posted.

(Enter a Letter Carrier.)

L.C. : A letter for your Worship ; thirty soldi to pay.

PANTA : Wheer be it from ?

L.C. *(banding letter)* : From the post at Rome.

PANTA. : It mun be from Naples. Here be ye'r soldi. It's main heavy.

L.C. : Axin' yer pardon ; who be Signor Lelio Bisognosi ?

PANTA. : My zon.

L.C. : Since when ?

PANTA : He be just coom from Naples.

L.C. : Here's one fur him, too.

PANTA : Gie it here ; I'm his fäther.

L.C. (*handing letter*) : Here it be ; seven soldi.

PANTA : Take it !

L.C. : Ye'r sarvant.

(*Exit.*)

PANTA : Who can it be from ? What's it about ? I doan't *know* the hand, nay, nor the seal neither fur that matter. Lordy, I be a fair old fule—I mun open un furst. (*Opens letter and reads.*)

“Most honoured Sir . . .”

Who be it from ? (*Reads.*)

“Masaniello Cappezali, Naples, April 24th, 1750. . . .”

Doan't know un, doan't know un—what's he want ? (*Reads.*)

“Having written twice to your son and had no answer from him . . .”

The lad stopped in Rome, the letters mun be there. (*Reads.*)

“ . . . I decided to write to your Worship, fearing either that he is not arrived or that he is ill. Signor Lelio begged me, his good friend, two days before his departure from Naples, to procure for him his certificate as an unmarried man, so that he might be enabled to marry while in foreign parts if he so wished.”

But the lad's married ! (*Reads.*)

“No one could do this better than I, because up to the hour of his departure no one else has been so constantly in his company.”

He mun know about it, then ! (*Reads.*)

“Therefore his friend Nicoluccio and I procured the said certificate for him, which, in order that it should not miscarry, I enclose in this letter, duly witnessed and legalized.”

What's it all about? His certificate as a bachelor? Then the lad's not married. Either 'tis forged or else the weddin' was pure invention. I mun get to the bottom o' this. (*Reads.*)

"It is a wonder that Lelio is returning to his home a free man after the infinite perils his goodness of heart has made him incur; but I may boast of having with my friendship helped him out of a hundred entanglements. So he leaves Naples free and untrammelled, which will be no little gratification to you, sir, enabling you as it will to procure for him a suitable and pleasing settlement in life. And I am, sir, your most humble and devoted . . ."

Ay, but what's all this? Lelio not married? Here be the bachelor's certificate. (*Opens the enclosed document.*) Ay, all in order—it can't be forged. 'Sides, why should the gem'man write a lie—it doan't stand to reason. But why should Lelio tell a zackful o' lies? What ails him? Let's see if t'other letter 'ull clear things up a bit. (*Begins to open second letter.*)

(*Enter LELIO.*)

LELIO: Ah, father, I was looking for you.

PANTA: Just in time, my boy. Who be Masaniello Cappezali?

LELIO: A great friend of mine. (*Aside.*) He knows all my games. I'd not have my father write to him for worlds.

PANTA: Be he a clever man? A good man and an honest?

LELIO: He was, but alas! he no longer is so.

PANTA: No? Why?

LELIO: Because the poor fellow's dead.

PANTA: When did 'un die?

LELIO: Before I left Naples.

PANTA: A matter o' three months ago?

LELIO: About that.

PANTA: Then I have a bit o' good news for 'ee: ye're dear friend's no longer dead.

LELIO: Eh? Good God!

PANTA: Be that his hand?

LELIO : Alas, no! (*Aside.*) It certainly is; what the devil is he writing about?

PANTA : Zarten sure?

LELIO : Quite sure—besides, he's dead.

PANTA (*Aside*) : Either the paper's false or my son's the Great Mogul itself o' lies. I mun find out which.

LELIO (*aside*) : I'd give a good deal to know what's in that letter. (*Aloud.*) Father, may I look at that writing a bit closer?

PANTA : Bean't the poor gem'man dead?

LELIO : Of course he's dead.

PANTA : He be dead—*that's* done wi'. We'll leave that, and now for another matter. What have ye been a-doin' of to Dr. Balanzoni?

LELIO : Nothing that I know of.

PANTA : Mebbe nuthin' to him, what about his darter?

LELIO : She has done something to me.

PANTA : What the devil can she have done to 'ee?

LELIO : She has bewitched me, blinded me; I doubt but what she has ruined me.

PANTA : Explain yourself.

LELIO : I was going about my business last evening when she saw me from her window. I must say I seem to have something in my face which conquers all women, and which conquered her too. She greeted me with a sigh; I, who when I hear a woman sigh, invariably fall dead, stopped to look at her. Conceive of it! My eyes met hers. I believe there are two devils in those eyes of hers; I was done for on the spot, and there is no remedy.

PANTA : Ye have an easy way o' doin' things. Did ye zurrinade her?

LELIO : Imagine it! Someone plays a serenade; I listen to it; the girl imagines it to be mine, and I let it go at that.

PANTA : And ye made up the story o' soopin' wi' her arterwards?

LELIO : I don't tell lies; I was in the house.

PANTA : An' ye sooped together.

LELIO : Well, to tell the truth, we did.

PANTA : An' ye didn't think ye'd be härmin' her good name?

LELIO : She invited me ; I went.

PANTA. : An' ye a married man !

LELIO : You're right. I was in the wrong. I'll not repeat the offence.

PANTA. : An' ye're sarten ye're married ?

LELIO : If my wife's not dead.

PANTA. : Whoi should she be dead ?

LELIO : She might have died in childbed.

PANTA. : But she be only six months gone !

LELIO : She might have miscarried.

PANTA. : D'ye know who the wench is that ye sooped with ?

LELIO : The daughter of Dr. Balanzoni.

PANTA. : Jest so. The gal I meant ye to marry.

LELIO : She ?

PANTA. : Yes.

LELIO : You told me she was the daughter of a Bolognese.

PANTA. : Well, what else is the doctor ?

LELIO (*aside*) : Lord ! what have I done now !

PANTA. : What did 'ee say ? If ye'd been a free man would 'ee have fancied her ?

LELIO : With all my heart. For Heaven's sake, sir, don't break off the negotiations, don't abandon the contract. Pacify the Doctor somehow—let us keep our hold on the daughter ; I cannot live without her !

PANTA. : What ? Ye be a married man !

LELIO : My wife may be dead.

PANTA. : A fule's hope. Have more sense an' let the wimmin be. We've done wi' Miss Rosaura, an' ye mun jest go back to Naples.

LELIO : Not that, for the love of Heaven.

PANTA. : Doan't 'ee want to zee ye're wife ?

LELIO : Do you want to see me dead ?

PANTA. : O' what ?

LELIO : I shall die if you deprive me of Rosaura.

PANTA. : How many wives does the man want ? Zeven, like the Gränd Turk ?

LELIO : One is all I ask.

PANTA. : Well, ye've Briseide.

LELIO : Alas ! Briseide—

PANTA. : What's the matter wi' her ?

LELIO (*kneeling*) : Behold me, sir, at your feet.

PANTA. : *Now*, what d'ye mean ?

LELIO : I crave your pardon a thousand times.

PANTA. : Get up, doan't make me feel bad.

LELIO : Briseide does not exist, and I am not married.

PANTA. : Good, zur, very good ! Zo that's the kind o' fib ye tell ye're fäther ? Get up, zur knight, zur liar. Zo that's ye're Naples breeding ? Afore ye're in Venice half an hour an' afore ye've seen your fäther, ye gets tangled wi' folk ye doan't knaw, an' who doan't know you ; ye give yourself out as a Neapolitan, Don Asdrubale of Castel d'Oro, a millionaire, nevvu o' princes an' little short o' brother o' the King ; ye play a thousand nasty pranks to the cost o' two honest decent gals. An' ye go as far as to take in ye're poor old fäther ; ye tell un ye've got a Naples leddy fur wife ; ye spin a yarn full o' Don Briseides, cocked watches an' repeatin' pistols ! Ye make me fair cry wi' pity fur a darter-in-law who doan't even exist, ye let me write a letter to ye're fäther-in-law what doan't exist neither, an' which I have here in my hand to post ! Who the divil larned ye all this ? An' how in the name o' Beelzebub did ye invent all these damned fables ?

LELIO : Ah, father, you bring the blushes to my cheeks. The love with which Rosaura inspired me, not knowing you destined her for me, forced me into all these lies, so repugnant to my delicacy and so unlike my usual custom.

PANTA. : If ye really meant to mend, mebbe 'twould be no great harm. But I fear me ye're a nat'ral born liar an' will do worse in the future.

LELIO : Never. I detest and abhor all lies, and am and always shall be an unflinching lover of the truth. Never again, I swear, will I let an equivocal, much less a false syllable, fall from these lips. But, for pity's sake, do not abandon me. Procure for me the forgiveness of my dear Rosaura, or you will see me die. Indeed, a little while ago, passion so o'ercame me that I spat quite a quantity of blood.

PANTA. (*aside*): Poor läd! Poor läd! (*Aloud.*) Ye'd häve my pity if ye could be trusted, but ye've proven yerself a zore liar.

LELIO: If I ever tell another lie, may the devil fly away with me.

PANTA.: Then ye bean't married?

LELIO: No, certainly not.

PANTA.: Nor engaged neither?

LELIO: I have never been engaged to any woman.

PANTA.: Neither in Naples nor out of it?

LELIO: Nowhere!

PANTA.: Steady, lad, steady!

LELIO: I would not tell another lie for all the wealth of Ind.

PANTA.: Have ye got ye're bachelor's certificate?

LELIO: Not at the moment, but I am expecting it.

PANTA.: An' if ye had it, what would ye do?

LELIO: Heaven willing, I should hope to marry my dear Rosaura as soon as possible.

PANTA.: Let's zee; what be this? (*Gives certificate to LELIO.*)

LELIO: Heaven be praised—my certificate!

PANTA.: Deary me, but it's false.

LELIO: Why false? Don't you see the seal?

PANTA.: 'Tis false, 'cos 'tis sent by a dead 'un.

LELIO: What do you mean by a dead man?

PANTA.: 'Tis sent by Signor Masaniello Cappezali, him that died three months ago.

LELIO (*taking the letter*): Let me look at it again; *now* I recognize the handwriting. It's not the old Masaniello who writes, but his son, my dear friend.

PANTA.: An' the zon has got the same name as his fäther?

LELIO: Yes. It's some matter of an inheritance; they both had to have the same name.

PANTA.: But ye didn't knaw ye're dear friend's handwriting?

LELIO: We've been so together that we've had no need to write to each other.

PANTA.: But ye knaw the fäther's hand.

LELIO : Oh, I happened to know that because he was a banker and made me letters of credit.

PANTA. : But, though his fäther's dead, the zon doan't seal wi' black ?

LELIO : You know that's quite out of fashion.

PANTA. : Lelio, doan't 'ee tell me no more lies.

LELIO : May I die if ever I lie again

PANTA. : Enough of that, ye rogue. So the certificate be genuine ?

LELIO : Absolutely. I could marry to-morrow.

PANTA. : What about they two months in Rome ?

LELIO : Oh, you mustn't mention that ; you must say that I came straight from Naples. We can easily find two witnesses to confirm it.

PANTA. : I thought there were to be no more lies.

LELIO : Why, that's not lying, that's helping matters along !

PANTA. : Enough o' that. The doctor and I will talk it out. Oh, here be a letter coom for 'ee .

LELIO : For me ?

PANTA. : Ay, fur 'ee. I paid seven soldi for it. It mun be from Rome.

LELIO : Maybe, let me see.

PANTA. (*opening letter very slowly*) : By ye're leave, I means to read it myself.

LELIO : Forgive me—but the letter is mine.

PANTA. : I'm your fäther, an' can read it.

LELIO : Oh, as you like. (*Aside.*) I hope this is not a new complication !

PANTA. (*reading*) : " Dearest husband." (*Looking at LELIO.*) " Dearest husband " ?

LELIO : Well it can't be for me.

PANTA. : Here be the address : " To the Most Excellent and Illustrious Signor Lelio Bisognosi, Venice."

LELIO : Well, you can see it's not for me.

PANTA. : Fur whoy ?

LELIO : Because I've no right to the " illustrious."

PANTA. : Oh, well, titles be cheap enough your way. Let's

get on wi' it. (*Reading.*) "Your most faithful wife, Cleonice Anselmi."

LELIO : Well, you see it's not for me.

PANTA : Whoi ?

LELIO : Because I don't know the lady.

PANTA : No more lies now !

LELIO : Heaven defend me from them.

PANTA : Then who be it meant for ?

LELIO : Somebody else with the same name, I suppose,

PANTA : I've lived here a mort o' years and never heard tell o' other Bisognosi in Venice.

LELIO : There are some in Naples and in Rome.

PANTA : Ay, but the letter's zent here.

LELIO : And could not some Lelio Bisognosi of Rome or Naples be here in Venice ?

PANTA : Mebbe—let's get on wi' it.

LELIO : Excuse me, sir, but it's hardly correct to read another man's letters. If you've opened one by mistake, you seal it up again without reading it.

PANTA : I can read a zon's letters, I zuppose ?

LELIO : But it is not mine.

PANTA : We shall zee.

LELIO (*aside*) : Reproaches from Cleonice, doubtless. Lud, more invention !

PANTA (*reading*) : "Your departure from Rome has plunged me into an atrocious melancholy, for you promised to take me to Venice with you, and then suddenly left me."

LELIO : I tell you it is not mine.

PANTA : It zays "left for Venice."

LELIO : All right, he's in Venice.

PANTA (*reading*) : "Remember, you promised to marry me. If you intend to deceive me, be sure that wherever you are I shall know how to obtain justice."

LELIO : Poor forsaken wretch !

PANTA : Doan't think much o' this Lelio Bisognosi. Let's hear the end on't. (*Reads.*)

"If you do not send for me and do not resolve to marry me,

I shall cause a person in authority to write to your father, Signor Pantalone."

Eh? Pantalone?

LELIO: Wonderful! The father's name is the same, too!

PANTA (*reads*): "I know that Signor Pantalone is an honourable Venetian merchant . . ."

Well? (*Reads.*)

"And though you were brought up in Naples by his brother . . ."

How she do go on! (*Reads.*)

"he will have some love and care for you, and will not wish to see you in prison. But I shall be driven to send you there to recover the money you took from me on account of my dowry."

What in the name of evil could be worse!

LELIO: I'll lay you this is some joke of a friend of mine.

PANTA.: A friend's joke? Heark'ee, my lad, ye doan't set foot inside my house again! I'l gie ye an allowance an' off ye pack to Rome to marry the wench!

LELIO: But, father—

PANTA. (*interrupting*): Off wi' you, liar, king o' liars, stony face, blackguard, zon of a whore!

(*Exit.*)

LELIO: Ah, well, let's take it philosophically!

CURTAIN.

END OF SCENE I.

SCENE 2. *A Room in the Doctor's House. That evening.*

(DOCTOR and ROSAURA discovered.)

DOCTOR : Well, madam, how long since you last saw my Lord Marquess Asdrubale of Castel d'Oro ?

ROSAURA : I am perfectly well aware that he is not a Marquess.

DOCTOR : Then do you know who he is ?

ROSAURA : Yes, sir. He is Ruggiero Pandolfi, a Neapolitan merchant.

DOCTOR : Ruggiero Pandolfi ?

ROSAURA : That's what he told me.

DOCTOR : A Neapolitan merchant ?

ROSAURA : Yes.

DOCTOR : Madwoman—dolted idiot—don't you know who he is ?

ROSAURA : Well, who is he then ?

DOCTOR : Lelio, Pantalone's son.

ROSAURA : The man you proposed marrying me to ?

DOCTOR : The same fellow.

ROSAURA : Why, if that's the case, it will be easier to arrange matters.

DOCTOR : Listen, shameless one—listen to where the ease with which you listened to a foreigner and your giddiness might have led you. Lelio Bisognosi, who attempted to seduce you under a false name, has a wife in Naples.

ROSAURA : Are you quite certain ? I cannot believe it.

DOCTOR : Yes, I'm quite certain. His father told me.

ROSAURA : Oh, unhappy me ! Oh, inhuman traitor ! (*Weeps.*)

DOCTOR : You weep, giddy pate, do you ? Learn to live more cautiously. You can't expect me to watch everything. I've my practice to attend to ; but as you're so utterly without prudence, I'll have you put in a safe place, where there'll be no danger of your falling into this kind of weakness again.

ROSAURA : You are right. Chastise me—I well deserve it. (*Aside.*) Scoundrel, impostor, Heaven shall punish you !

(*Exit.*)

DOCTOR : A part of me sympathises with her, I'm sorry to say, but for the sake of her reputation I mean to put her out of harm's way.

(Enter OTTAVIO.)

OTTAVIO : Sir, your maid brought me word that your daughter Beatrice wished to speak to me. I'm a man of honour, and do not treat with a daughter without her father's knowledge.

DOCTOR : I'm glad to hear it. You fulfil the idea I had formed of your prudence. If you still wish it, we can conclude your contract of marriage with my daughter before nightfall. (*Aside.*) I can't wait to rid the house of her.

OTTAVIO : For my part I'm quite ready.

DOCTOR : We'll call Beatrice and hear what she has to say.

(Enter COLOMBINA.)

COLOM. : Signor Lelio Bisognosi, quondam Marquis, would like to speak with you, sir.

OTTAVIO : I shall hold him to account then.

DOCTOR : Don't doubt but that he'll punish himself. Let's hear what he has to say, anyhow. Show him in.

(Exit COLOMBINA.)

OTTAVIO : I expect he has got some new trick up his sleeve.

DOCTOR : Well, if he's married, he'll play no more tricks on Rosaura.

(Enter LELIO.)

LELIO (*to* DOCTOR) : Sir, I am come covered with blushes and confusion to crave your forgiveness.

DOCTOR : You damned impostor !

OTTAVIO (*to* LELIO) : To-morrow I've got something to say to you.

LELIO (*to* OTTAVIO) : *You* wish to fight me, to be my enemy, and *I* am here to implore your friendly assistance.

OTTAVIO : With whom ?

LELIO : With my dearest, most esteemed Doctor Balanzoni.

DOCTOR : What do you want of me ?

LELIO : Your daughter's hand.

DOCTOR : What ! My daughter's hand, and you a married man !!

LELIO : I ? Married ? Surely not !

DOCTOR : What new imposition is this ?

OTTAVIO : Your lies have passed all credence.

LELIO : Who told you I was married ?

DOCTOR : Your father told me.

LELIO : Ah, Doctor, it is indeed painful to contradict my own father ; but care for my reputation and the love that I bear Rosaura force me to do so. No, my father is not telling the truth.

DOCTOR : Aren't you ashamed to say such things ? Your father is the soul of honour.

OTTAVIO : When do you mean to cease your impostures ?

LELIO : You shall see if I speak falsely. Here is my certificate as an unmarried man, issued at Naples. Signor Ottavio, you know that kingdom, examine it and tell me if it is not in order. (*Hands certificate to OTTAVIO.*)

OTTAVIO : Yes, it's true ; the form is correct and the seals too.

DOCTOR : Powers above ! you're not married ?

LELIO : Of course not.

DOCTOR : But why should Pantalone say you were ?

LELIO : I'll tell you why.

DOCTOR : Not another fable !

LELIO : My father regretted having given you his word that I should marry your daughter.

DOCTOR : Why ?

LELIO : Because this morning a marriage broker who knew of my arrival offered him a dowry of 50,000 ducats.

DOCTOR : This affront from Signor Pantalone !

LELIO : Greed so easily blinds a man.

DOCTOR : So you're in love with my daughter ?

LELIO : Yes, sir, too much so.

DOCTOR : How did you manage to fall in love so quickly ?

LELIO : So quickly ? In two months the baby love becomes a giant.

DOCTOR : What do you mean by " two months " ? You arrived yesterday.

LELIO : Sir, I will now reveal to you the whole truth. Do you know how long it is since I left Naples ?

DOCTOR : Your father told me about three months.

LELIO : Well, where was I those three months ?

DOCTOR : He said you were in Rome.

LELIO : That is not true. I stopped three or four days in Rome and then came straight to Venice.

DOCTOR : And your father did not know this ?

LELIO : No, because when I arrived he was as usual at his Casino at Mira.

DOCTOR : Well, why didn't you join him there ?

LELIO : Because, having seen Rosaura, I could not tear myself away.

OTTAVIO : Signor Lelio, your lies grow greater. I've lodged for two months at " The Eagle," and you only arrived there last night.

LELIO : I stayed till then at " The Arms of France," but in order to have Rosaura more constantly before my eyes, I removed yesterday to " The Eagle."

DOCTOR : If you're in love with her, why invent the serenade and supper ?

LELIO : The serenade was no invention.

DOCTOR : And the supper ?

LELIO : I merely said that I had done what I should have liked to have done.

OTTAVIO : What about squiring the ladies to the Fair this morning ?

LELIO : Oh, that's enough ! I said a lot of foolish things I'm sorry for now, and there's an end of it. (*To the DOCTOR.*) Sir, you must believe that I am the son of Pantalone Bisognosi.

DOCTOR : Well, even that may not be true.

LELIO : I am a free man and here is my certificate.

DOCTOR : If it's genuine.

LELIO : Ottavio recognizes it as authentic.

OTTAVIO : Well, it certainly looks all right.

LELIO : My marriage with Rosaura has already been considered by my father and yourself.

DOCTOR : I don't like to think it's true that Signor Pantalone breaks his word for the sake of 50,000 ducats.

LELIO : Let me tell you, that dowry went up in smoke, and my father regrets having invented the tale of my marriage.

DOCTOR : Well, why doesn't he come himself then ?

LELIO : He doesn't dare to ; he has sent me instead.

DOCTOR : It seems rather a muddle.

LELIO : It's a fact, nevertheless.

DOCTOR : Well, well, then you shall have her. If Signor Pantalone is content, well and good, and I'm pleased ; and if he isn't, I'm even with him for that insult. What do you say, Ottavio ?

OTTAVIO : Quite right. She'll be off your hands when she's married.

DOCTOR : Give me that certificate.

LELIO : Here you are.

DOCTOR : But, look here, you might have become engaged to someone else in these three months.

LELIO : I've been the whole time in Venice.

DOCTOR : Can I believe you ?

LELIO : I would not tell another lie for a monarch's throne.

DOCTOR : I'll go and fetch my daughter. If she is satisfied, we can conclude matters.

(*Exit.*)

LELIO (*aside*) : The blow is struck. Once I'm married, there's an end to the Roman woman.

OTTAVIO : Signor Lelio, the luck has been with you long enough.

LELIO : Friend, I shall not fight you to-morrow.

OTTAVIO : Why not ?

LELIO : Because I hope to be engaged in another duel.

(Enter DOCTOR and ROSAURA.)

DOCTOR (to ROSAURA): Here is Signor Lelio, who wishes to marry you. What do you say? Are you satisfied?

ROSAURA: But I thought you said he was married already?

DOCTOR: I thought so, but he seems to be disengaged.

ROSAURA: I didn't think him capable of such deceit.

LELIO: No, dearest. I could not lie to a being to whom I am so devoted.

ROSAURA: You have told me lies.

DOCTOR: Oh, let's end matters! Do you want to marry him?

ROSAURA: If you give him to me, I'll take him.

(Enter PANTALONE.)

PANTA.: By your leave, Doctor! What be my boy a-doing of?

DOCTOR: Do you know what your son is doing? He is giving me satisfaction for the affront you have put upon my house.

PANTA.: Me? Whoi, what have I done?

DOCTOR: You gave me to understand that your son was married, so as to rid yourself of your obligation to me.

LELIO: Come, that's all over. Here is my bride-to-be. Be quiet, and say no more.

PANTA.: I? Quiet? Scoundrel! Quiet? I? (To DOCTOR.) Have ye the goodness to read this letter and tell I if your gal can marry him after that. (Gives DOCTOR *Cleonice's letter*.)

LELIO: The letter doesn't happen to be addressed to me.

DOCTOR: Excellent! Signor Lelio, you have been two months and more in Venice? You are under no engagement to any woman? You are free? Very free indeed! Rosaura, stand away from that infamous monster! He's been three months in Rome; he is promised to Cleonice Anselmi, and can marry no one else. (To LELIO.) Impostor! Liar! Shameless one! Brazen-face!

LELIO: Since my father is determined to put me to the blush, I am forced to tell you that this Cleonice you speak of is a light

woman with whom I found myself by chance in a Roman inn for the three days I was there. Having cornered me one night when I was overcome by wine, she extracted this promise from me without my knowing anything about it. I can call witnesses to prove that.

DOCTOR : This will take time to clear up. Meanwhile, kindly leave the house.

LELIO : Do you wish to kill me ? How can I exist away from my dear Rosaura ?

DOCTOR : I begin to understand you a bit. As for dying for my daughter, I don't believe you care a rap for her !

LELIO : I not care ? Ask her if I value her love, her favours. Tell them, Rosaura, all that I have done to please you in these last few hours. Tell them of the magnificent serenade I prepared for you, and of the candour with which I revealed myself to you in a poem.

(Enter FLORINDO and BRIGHELLA.)

FLOR. : Doctor, Signora Rosaura, with your permission I should like to reveal a secret which I have till now most jealously guarded. Since an impostor is attempting to profit by my attentions, I am forced to now raise the mask and show you the truth. Know, then, that the serenade was mine, and that I am the author of the poem.

LELIO : Liar, 'tis false !

FLOR. : Here is the canzonetta I composed, and the rough draft of the poem. Signora Rosaura, examine them, I beg. (*Gives papers to ROSAURA.*)

BRIG. : Ay, Doctor, saving your presence, 'twas I as was commissioned by Signor Florindo to order the zurrinade, and I saw un throw the poem on the balcony.

DOCTOR : And what has Signor Lelio to say to all this ?

LELIO : I ? Oh, I am convulsed. What more amusing comedy could I have prepared for Signora Rosaura ? A stupid and lacklustre lout orders a serenade, and dares not reveal himself as author. He writes a poem, throws it on the balcony, then hides and keeps silent about it. Now, isn't that enough to make one

split one's sides with laughing? Then I appear, and with my witty inventions heighten the humour of this fantastic scene, and force our stolid Strephon to disclose himself—a trifle late. The prize is mine, and with the paternal consent, in the presence of this august assembly, I bestow on her my hand as bridegroom.

PANTA. : Ay, what a clack!

DOCTOR : Fair and softly, my Master of Illusion. So, Florindo, you love Rosaura?

FLOR. : Sir, till now I have not dared reveal my passion.

DOCTOR : What do you say, Rosaura? Will you have Florindo for a husband?

ROSAURA : If Heaven wills it. Lelio is a liar, and I would not have him for all the gold in the universe.

PANTA. : Ay, 'tis but right he mun suffer. I should dearly love to thrash him with these old hands of mine!

DOCTOR : Be off to your Roman woman!

LELIO : A woman of the town cannot oblige me to marry her.

(Enter ARLECCHINO.)

ARLE. (to LELIO) : Master, zave yerself!

LELIO : What's the matter now?

PANTA. (to ARLECCHINO) : You tell I.

ARLE. : There bean't time for lies. (To LELIO.) The Roman's in Venice.

DOCTOR : And who, pray, may this be?

ARLE. : Mrs. Cleonice Anselmi.

DOCTOR : A prostitute?

ARLE. : Doan't 'ee zay such things! The darter o' the richest merchant in Rome.

LELIO : I regret to say it is not true. Arlecchino lies. Upon my word of honour, she is anything but that.

OTTAVIO : Your honour! You lost that some time ago.

DOCTOR : Out of my house!

PANTA. (to DOCTOR) : So ye turn out my zon like that, do 'ee?

DOCTOR : A son that reflects no credit on the honoured character of the father.

PANTA. : Ay, me, you speak truth. A scamp of a zon, a rogue of a zon, who turns the house hind-afore, and makes his old father seem a baboon! O luckless zon! O shameful zon! Out o' my sight—ne'er let me zee 'ee again. Here, I swear, I tear 'ee from my old heart!

(*Exit.*)

LELIO : Oh, curse my damned lies! I detest you!

ROSAURA (*calling*) : Colombina?

(*Enter COLOMBINA.*)

COLOM. : Madame?

ROSAURA (*whispers to COLOMBINA.*)

COLOM. : Immediately.

(*Exit.*)

DOCTOR (*to LELIO*) : Shame on you!

LELIO : May I be struck dead if I ever utter another lie!

OTTAVIO : Mend your ways if you want to live with honest folk.

(*Enter COLOMBINA with box of laces.*)

ROSAURA : Here, sir impostor, are the laces you gave me. I'll have nothing of yours! (*Gives box to LELIO.*)

FLOR. : Why, I sent those laces!

BRIG. : Ay, I bought 'em for the young master. Paid ten zecchins for 'em at the Zign o' the Cat; and bade them be sent to Mrs. Rosaura with nary a name to 'em.

ROSAURA : Oh, now I understand! (*Takes laces back.*)

LELIO : Signor Florindo's silence stimulated me to acquire favour in the eyes of two beauties, and, to keep up the fable, I began to tell a few lies; and lies, being prolific, bred a thousand. Well, I suppose I must marry the Roman. Doctor—Signora Rosaura—I crave your pardon. Henceforward I declare myself a votary to truth.

(*Exit.*)

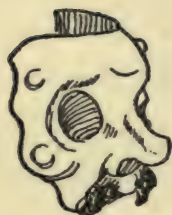
ARLE. : And here be the zong I larned this day :
Ne'er tell a lie, whate'er y'r intention ;
But if ye're put to it hard ye may
Mek shift to scrape through wi' a witty invention.

(Trots out after LELIO.)

(The Rest left looking at closed door.)

CURTAIN.

END OF PLAY.



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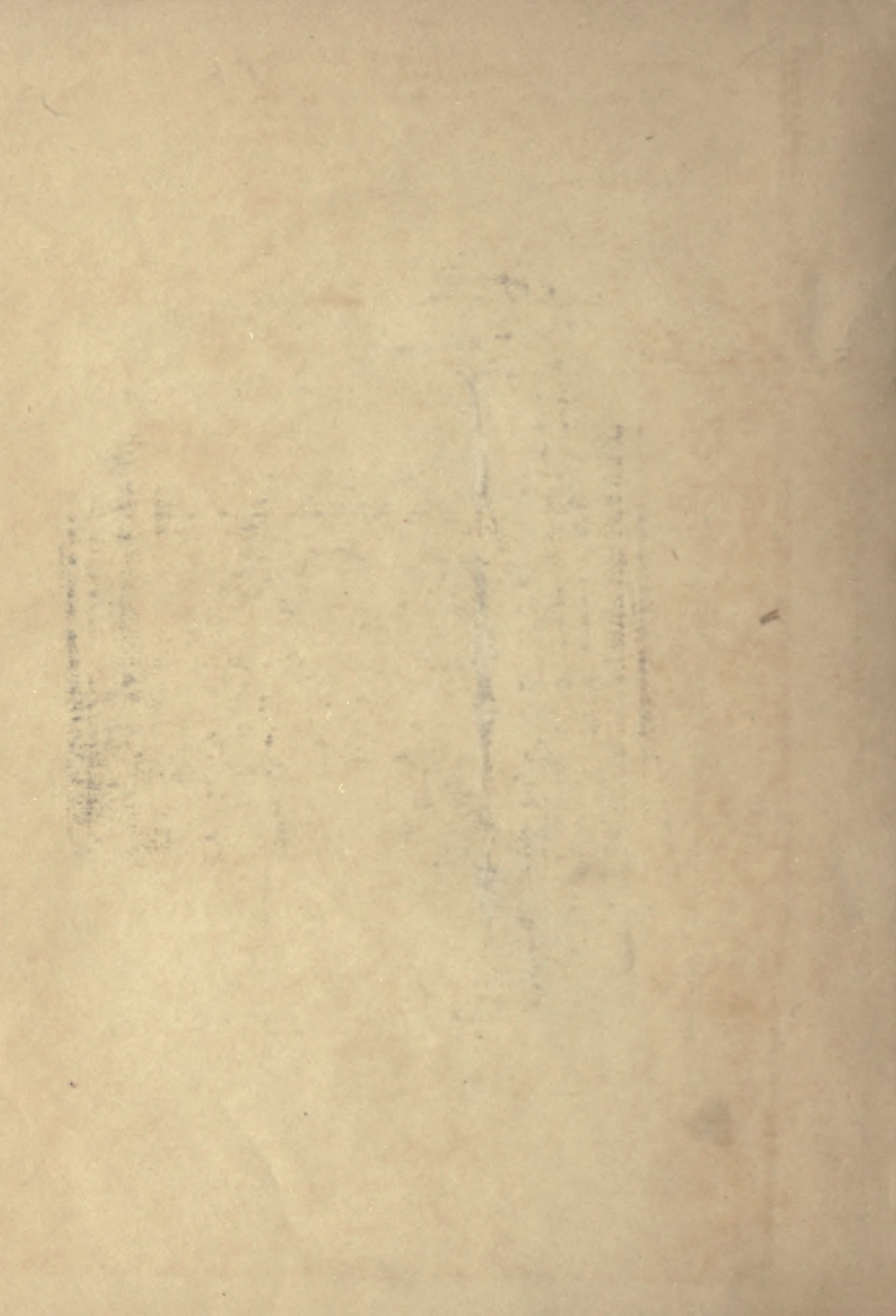
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